ANNELIES VON RIBBENTROP THE WAR GUILT OF THE RESISTANCE

FROM BRITISH SECRET DOCUMENTS 1938/39

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THE WAR GUILT OF THE RESISTANCE

FROM BRITISH SECRET DOCUMENTS 1938/39

Published from the estate of Rudolf von Ribbentrop

The publication of my diaries is intended to highlight the importance of the secret services. They are the missing link in almost all historical treatises.

Sir Alexander Cadogan

Sir Alexander Cadogan Permanent Under-Secretary of State in the British Foreign Office 1938-1946

DRUFFEL-VERLAG LEONI AM STARNBERGER SEE

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Foreword by the editor

This book is Annelies von Ribbentrop's final work on the events leading up to World War II. New documents on German foreign policy, which have now been declassified by the Allies and which the author was only able to obtain with great difficulty, form the core of this work. They provide further fascinating insights into the events leading up to World War II.

According to the testimony of the conspirator Gisevius in 1946 at the Nuremberg Main Trial, Ribbentrop wrote in one of his last notes during the trial: "In London, they counted on the group of conspirators consisting of the most influential German military and political leaders and hoped that this would lead to an easy victory over Germany. These circles of conspirators therefore played a decisive role in the outbreak of the war. They thwarted all our efforts to reach a peaceful solution and tipped the scales in favor of the British decision to go to war." (Joachim von Ribbentrop, "Between London and

Moscow," Leoni, 1953, 5. 220.)

In this book, Ribbentrop's thesis is clearly proven for the first time on the basis of British and Allied secret documents and memoirs of key players from all sides. In 1938 and 1939, German conspirators in top positions in the Reich repeatedly called on the British government to oppose Germany and run the risk of war, as they believed that only in the event of war would the psychological conditions be right for Hitler to be removed.

But these people did not only betray their own country; they also betrayed the 'promises made to their English allies'.

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negotiation partners.

i The English government saw the German opposition's offers as a way out of the dilemma of either having to wage another world war with Germany, which would undoubtedly jeopardize the empire (and, as history has shown, ultimately cost the English as well), or else a

accept Germany's ongoing rise to power in Europe and thus lose political influence itself. England gave Poland a militarily nonsensical guarantee in order to provoke a war, after the outbreak of which the German opposition had promised to overthrow Hitler, which would have initially led to a decisive weakening of Germany in Europe. The fact that the German opposition did not have the courage to remove Hitler after the outbreak of the war puts the English government in the role of the betrayed deceiver who had become involved with business partners who lacked the caliber in every respect to be able to fulfill the commitments they had entered into.

Sir Robert Vansittart, who was undoubtedly a key figure in the British government's deliberations, as is repeatedly evident from the documents, is said to have been asked by one of the Kordt brothers to testify about his conspiratorial activities during his denazification proceedings. Sir Robert is said to have coldly declared that he knew nothing about this role. The resentment against conspirators who proved to be unreliable partners is understandable.

The thesis expressed and proven here is not yet being discussed in public opinion today. The resistance presents the activities discussed in this book as a struggle against a dictatorial regime and wisely refrains from admitting that it was simply a case of treason by top officials of that very dictatorship. The English government naturally has no interest in portraying itself as a deceived deceiver.

However, anyone interested in the historical truth will not be able to ignore the facts presented in this book. The aim of this book is to present facts and shed light on the background.

Rudolf von Ribbentrop

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Introduction
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When my book DEUTSCH-ENGLISCHE GEHEIMVERBINDUNGEN (German-English Secret Connections) was published in 1967, it soon became clear that further work would be necessary. Too many documents were missing. Above all, Ribbentrop's main report London 4A 35522 of December 28, 1937, was still classified, and the reports of the German resistance movement seemed too sparse to shed light on the extent of opposition activities.

Now, in 1972, the British government has released further German secret reports from 1938/39 to the public. These documents are of the utmost importance, even if they are rarely actual reports on the situation in Germany, but rather contain recommendations and advice from the German conspirators on how British propaganda should be handled in order to strike the right chord with the German people. Everything suitable was broadcast in German from England via radio. The

'Germans who believed at the time that they would learn the 'truth' from the English broadcaster heard only the subversive theories of the 'conspirators'.

Germans who believed at the time that they were hearing the 'truth' from the English broadcaster heard only the subversive theories of the 'conspirators'.

After the rambling explanations of the conspirator Bernd

! Gisevius, the former Reich Foreign Minister, formulated these sentences (cf. J. von Ribbentrop, Zwischen London und Nuremberg, 1946) at the Nuremberg Trial in 1946.

! Gisevius in the Nuremberg Trial in 1946, the former Reich Foreign Minister formulated the following sentences (cf. J. von Ribbentrop, Zwischen London

and Moscow, p. 220), which form the core of the so-called Ribbentrop thesis. Although this thesis is widely discussed in academic circles, it is deliberately ignored by the mainstream media and the political establishment.

and Moscow, p. 220), which form the core of the so-called Ribbentrop thesis. This thesis, which is widely discussed in academic circles, is deliberately withheld from an interested public. Hans Rothfels, editor of the Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte (Quarterly Journal of Contemporary History) published by the Institute for Contemporary History in Munich and one of the earliest interpreters of the German traitor groups, quotes Ribbentrop's insight that "these circles of conspirators played a decisive role in the outbreak of the war," and comments on it in connection with the "hereditary evil of German discord" in a very remarkable way:

"In Ribbentrop's memoirs, this discord, or rather the knowledge of it gained in England, appears to be the very trigger for the Second World War. What Hitler is accused of as a sin is then limited to the fact that he did not cut off the head of the 'disgusting worm' in time.

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tig zertreten habe. Such an attack also confirms that the subject of resistance is not a thing of the past,

but a very topical issue and, at the same time, a question of moral and political standards of conduct which, given the conditions of our era with its ideological fronts extending beyond national borders, have gained new relevance." (Quarterly Journal for Contemporary History 1969, Issue 3, p. 253.)

It is significant that in 1969 Rothfels did not consider the topic of resistance to be obsolete, but rather considered it to be highly relevant and in need of examination in terms of the moral behavior of political actors. Rothfels also recalls that for a considerable period after the war, the "German opposition was taboo." For example, "a US correspondent who began to investigate the reality of the situation in 1945 was forbidden to publish anything about a specific opposition to Hitler, and this ban was issued by the highest authorities in Washington." Later, Rothfels continues, another American journalist working in Germany had Fabian von Schlabrendorff's book Offiziere gegen Hitler (Officers Against Hitler) confiscated. According to Rothfels, in the summer of 1946, all broadcasters in the American zone were banned from mentioning the "putsch" of 1944 after Frankfurt Radio had planned a memorial service for the second anniversary of the assassination attempt on Hitler (ibid.).

This book contains previously unpublished secret reports that were released to the public in London in 1972. The harvest from this treasure trove of documents is astonishingly large.

4Even insiders will be astonished to learn, for example, that Birger Dahlerus was not a man of Göring, but an agent of Neville Chamberlain.

One should not believe that the latest publications have revealed all the secret connections between the German opposition and the British government. The papers of Sir Horace Wilson, chief advisor to the British government on technical matters and Chamberlain's "alter ego" for all secret connections, are said to have been destroyed. Other important Chamberlain papers are still sealed, especially those dealing with the abdication of Edward VII. Similarly, the estate of Foreign Office official Sir Orme Sargent remains closed until the end of the 1970s. Permanent Under-Secretary Sir Alexander Cadogan regrets that so much has been published about the secret services. But since this cannot be changed, he advises that as much of it as possible be

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because they are the missing link in almost all historical accounts.

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Ribbentrop in London Appointment

With the appointment of Adolf Hitler as German Reich Chancellor on January 30, 1933, a new era began for Germany. Hitler did not enter the political arena as an unknown figure. His party program was widely read both at home and abroad. Point 2 stated: "Abolition of the peace treaties of Versailles and St. Germain." Although the revision of the Treaty of Versailles had already been sought during the time of Hitler's predecessor, Reich Chancellor Heinrich Brüning, and had found advocates among

Germany's neighbors, the initial response to Hitler was one of wait-and-see. But his domestic successes —overcoming unemployment in a very short time—astonished the world. People became curious. The 1936 Olympic Games provided an opportunity to take a closer look at the new Reich. From Hitler's "Mein Kampf," written in 1923/24, people were familiar with his idea of a German alliance policy: "If we want to look for European allies, only two states remain, England and Italy" (1934 edition, p. 699) *.

Joachim von Ribbentrop did not belong to the "old guard" of the National Socialist Party. He did not participate in the internal political struggle of the 1920s, although he did toy with the idea of running as a candidate for the German People's Party. It was not until the final phase of the Weimar Republic that he joined the NSDAP. A personal conversation with Hitler in the summer of 1932 finally set the course. As a member of the party, he actively intervened in political events. Ribbentrop quietly conducted the negotiations that led to Hitler's appointment as Reich Chancellor. He had strongly advocated a coalition with Papen to Hitler. He was uncompromisingly opposed to establishing contact with Schleicher, whose character weaknesses made constructive cooperation impossible.

* Source references are abbreviated throughout the text. Abbreviations and bibliographic references for the works cited can be found in the list of abbreviations and bibliography at the end of the book.

would do. Even Hitler eventually realized that Schleicher was playing a double role.

Ribbentrop spent his formative years before World War I in Grenoble and London and then lived as an independent businessman in the US and Canada. He made no secret of his pro-French and Anglophile sentiments. Because of his contacts in these countries, Hitler recruited him as a foreign policy advisor, entrusted him with unofficial diplomatic missions, and appointed him plenipotentiary for disarmament in April 1934. In his personal conversations with Western foreign ministers shortly after the Nazi seizure of power, Ribbentrop sought to dispel prejudices against the Nazi regime and explain Hitler's revisionist foreign policy goals. He initiated direct contacts between the Chancellor, French Prime Minister Daladier, and British Prime Minister Baldwin in order to bring about a discussion at the highest level on the pending issues. Hitler and Ribbentrop had high hopes for these planned talks, which would certainly have contributed to defusing the atmosphere in Europe if they had taken place.

Despite a number of obstacles placed in his way, including by the Germans, Ribbentrop held his own on the European diplomatic stage. At the end of May 1935, Hitler appointed him ambassador for special purposes, reporting directly to him. The upcoming German-British negotiations were to be a test case. When Ribbentrop signed the naval agreement in June, the first difficult hurdle on the road to German-British reconciliation seemed to have been cleared. The treaty was intended as a generous concession by Germany to allay London's fears of rivalry between the two nations on the world's oceans. Germany's self-restraint was supposed to be the prelude to an alliance with England. The British, however, feared they had already gone too far, as the naval agreement was the first breach of the Treaty of Versailles, which had fundamentally prohibited any rearmament in Germany.

Ribbentrop's success brought him congratulations, but naturally also envy. Although the Foreign Office still restrained its antipathy, hidden poison arrows were already being fired at Hitler's foreign policy advisor. After Ribbentrop created his own office, the so-called "Dienststelle Ribbentrop," in 1934

, the circles that would later engage in their fateful conspiracy first appeared on the scene. The Foreign Office assigned Dr. Erich Kordt, who committed suicide in the spring of 1971 for reasons that remain unclear and whose body was later recovered from the Rhine, to Ribbentrop's office as a liaison officer. Upon his appointment, the then State Secretary von Bülow instructed the young Kordt "not to correct Ribbentrop's mistakes, but to let him bring about his own downfall." "This was certainly opposition," concluded historian Rothfels, "but the maxim was to wait until the regime, possibly after some initial successes, ended up in a dead end." (Hans Rothfels: Die Deutsche Opposition gegen Hitler [The German Opposition to Hitler]. Krefeld 1949, p. 69.) Bitterness grew when Ribbentrop returned from the London conference with a diplomatic success. Even before his departure for London, officials at the Foreign Office criticized the content of the negotiation pact. Contrary to Ribbentrop's demand for a 30% reduction in German naval strength relative to that of the British, they spoke of a maximum demand of 15% as a possible outcome of the negotiations. They considered "anything more" completely out of the question. However, after Ribbentrop had finally negotiated 35% in London, the same circles declared that Ribbentrop's results were a failure, as he should have pushed for a ratio of 100:50.

The successful conclusion of the naval agreement with England had broken the ice for the time being. In the winter of 1935/36, Ribbentrop made further advances to improve German-English relations. However, his proposals, repeatedly presented in London, to conclude an air agreement parallel to the naval agreement were met with evasive answers and ultimately failed. Ribbentrop also used his connections in Paris in the hope of improving the atmosphere between the Reich and France. The restoration of military sovereignty in the Rhineland as Germany's response to the Soviet-French military alliance to secure the western border of the Reich had a retarding effect on his efforts. (Joachim von Ribbentrop, pp. 77-78.)

As a result, Anthony Eden, Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign Office, mobilized the Locarno powers to discuss diplomatic countermeasures with his French and Belgian colleagues. He proposed presenting Hitler with a questionnaire to which detailed German answers were expected. The Foreign Office then drafted a memorandum which

Prime Minister Baldwin. In a personal discussion with Neville Chamberlain, Eden obtained his full agreement to this note. However, resistance arose immediately when the infamous questionnaire was presented to the British cabinet in its original form. There was fierce opposition. Some cabinet members asked Eden the naive question of why the whole procedure should be initiated at all, since it could only give Berlin the impression that London was questioning Hitler's willingness to contribute to the consolidation of the European order. And that was precisely what Eden had intended. He wanted to "expose" Hitler. The British ambassador Phipps delivered the questionnaire to the German Foreign Minister von Neurath, but London had to wait another week before Hitler even accepted the note. In the meantime, the questionnaire had already been published in the British press. (Eden: Facing the Dictators. p. 371f.) Eden intended to put Germany in the corner. This impression had to be destroyed. Ribbentrop urged Hitler to give a response that was binding in tone but unambiguous in substance. However, he was unable to get his advice accepted. (Krogmann diary, June 1936.)

In 1936, German-English relations were once again moving toward a stalemate. This year also marked a turning point in Ribbentrop's life. Rumors had been circulating for months that Hitler had chosen a new field of activity for Ribbentrop. A few weeks after the conclusion of the naval agreement, Dr. Karl

Bömer of the NSDAP's Foreign Policy Office told an American diplomat that Ribbentrop's "brilliant" conduct of the negotiations in London would soon be recognized with his appointment as foreign minister. He mentioned autumn 1935 as a possible date for a reshuffle in the Foreign Office. Ribbentrop was therefore already being discussed as Neurath's presumed successor at that time. (Ambassador Dodd to Secretary of State Cordell Hull. Confidential. Berlin, July 17, 1935. No. 2151. National Archives.)

When Hitler decided in March 1936 to send German troops into the Rhineland, he consulted Ribbentrop about the possible reaction of other countries. In response to Hitler's question, Ribbentrop expressed the opinion—shared, incidentally, by Foreign Minister von Neurath—that the occupation of the Rhineland could be carried out without war. (Ribbentrop, op. cit., p. 78.) Ribbentrop's sober assessment of the situation impressed Hitler, especially since his own

military advisors predicted military conflicts in Europe. When Hitler met with Carl V. Krogmann, the mayor of Hamburg, shortly thereafter, he engaged him in a brief personal conversation. Without much preamble or explanation, he asked Krogmann what he thought of Ribbentrop. The mayor, who had already met with Ribbentrop on several occasions, responded positively. Hitler did not leave him without an explanation for his question: "I believe," Hitler said, "that Ribbentrop will one day become foreign minister." (Krogmann diary, March 1936.)

On January 20, 1936, King George V died. His son succeeded him as Edward VIII at the head of the British Empire. Hitler asked the Duke of Coburg, as a close relative of the English royal family, to talk to the young monarch about the future shape of German-English relations. Just one day after the death of George V, the first talks took place at Buckingham Palace. The young monarch and the duke discussed the burning issue "in a spirit of family openness": England—Germany. Edward V considered an alliance between the two great nations to be "a compelling necessity and guideline for foreign policy." France must be included in this pact system. Only a close coalition between the two continental powers and the maritime power could guarantee "European peace in the long term." The king described the League of Nations as a "farce." World politics was determined solely by Germany, England, France, Japan, and the United States. Moving on to more concrete points of discussion, the Duke of Coburg asked whether a meeting between Hitler and Baldwin would be appropriate to speed up the resolution of the outstanding problems. The monarch replied immediately: "I myself wish to speak to Hitler and will do so here or in Germany. Please tell him that." Eduard VIH. had words of praise for Ribbentrop's efforts to bring about a German-English reconciliation. He particularly praised his negotiating skills, which had led to the conclusion of the naval agreement in June 1935. He saw Ribbentrop as the "best man for unofficial German-English politics." As ambassador of the German Reich, he wanted Ribbentrop as his confidant in London. Ribbentrop was to act as coordinator of all German-English relations. The king described the acting German ambassador von Hoesch as a good representative of the German Reich, but a "poor representative

of the Third Reich." He also had the impression that the German embassy staff in London was not very "loyal." The events of the following years proved Eduard VIII right. The German embassy at St. James's Court developed into a center for anti-government German circles. In order to set the course for the future, the king wanted "a representative National Socialist from Germany as ambassador, who would be regarded both as a representative of official policy and as Hitler's confidant." The young

monarch hoped to be able to exert more influence on the affairs of the English government. He was well aware of the difficulties. The Duke of Coburg was greatly impressed by the king's desire to "bring Germany and England together" and considered it important to respect the king's wish to establish a relationship of trust between Germany's unofficial policy toward England and its official policy.

Ribbentrop had a big job ahead of him. His role was "much" discussed in British circles. His English opponents left no stone unturned in their efforts to discredit him. They spread the rumor that "a special ambassador only has a temporary assignment, which can be transferred to someone else or terminated at any time. This cast doubt on the permanence of his position and thus on the possibility of serious politics with him in the long term." The Duke of Coburg therefore suggested that the title of ambassador be regarded as a "rank and position" and that he be given the title "Personal Adviser to the Führer" in the English press to express the permanence of his position. (Duke of Coburg. For the Führer and Pg. v. Ribbentrop only. Strictly confidential. No copy to: Foreign Office. Evidence 150. Staff Office of Prime Minister General Field Marshal Göring. Foreign reports. Reports from the years 1933-1939. Microfilm roll T 120, 2621, E382060 ff. and E382077E£.)

On April 10, 1936, the German ambassador in London, Leopold von Hoesch, died suddenly. Hitler now had the opportunity to fill the important post in London and thus accommodate the wishes of the British monarch. However, it is not known whether Hitler had already informed Ribbentrop of his plans at this point. What is certain is that he discussed the replacement of the ambassador in London with General von Blomberg and had shortlisted Ribbentrop as Hoesch's successor. On June 21, State Secretary von Bülow died. Hitler, who had originally intended to appoint Ribbentrop,

bentrop to London, was now toying with the idea of appointing his foreign policy advisor as State Secretary in the Foreign Office. (Krogmann diary, end of June 1936.)

Hitler had already invited his extraordinary ambassador to the Wagner Festival as his personal guest in the spring of 1936. When Ribbentrop arrived in Bayreuth in August, Hitler appointed him State Secretary in the Foreign Office. Ribbentrop expressed his gratitude for the trust placed in him. A long discussion about German-English relations followed. Hitler asked him about the prospects for reconciliation between the two nations. Ribbentrop was quite skeptical about the possibility. He spoke of the resistance that had been encountered by all German offers. However, he did not consider the situation entirely hopeless. Edward VIII had made no secret of his pro-German attitude. His popularity extended to broad sections of the English population. Perhaps he would succeed in bringing the British people closer to a German-English reconciliation through his example. Hitler also viewed the prospects for the original plan for a German-English alliance very pessimistically, but repeatedly stated that he would leave no stone unturned in order to win England over to an alliance. Ribbentrop therefore suggested making one last attempt and offered Hitler his services. He was prepared to take on the London mission. Hitler immediately accepted this proposal. Neurath also welcomed this decision. Ribbentrop had turned down the secure position of State Secretary in the Foreign Office and exchanged it for the role of ambassador in London. But he was under no illusions. (v. Ribbentrop, op. cit., p. 90f.) Critical voices were immediately raised in the British press. But there were also some favorable comments. The famous British philosopher of history, Professor Toynbee, "warmly" welcomed Ribbentrop's appointment as ambassador to London in publications and in personal conversations. (Confidential. England. Mood report, Oct. 25, 1936, in: Reich Chancellery. Files concerning: England, vol. 4, microfilm T 120, 781, 371440£.) Former Prime Minister Lloyd George also stated that "the appointment of Mr. von Ribbentrop in England is welcomed and should be seen as clear evidence of

the Reich Chancellor's intention to do his utmost to give weight to his policy—quite apart from Mr. von Ribbentrop's personal qualities." (Thomas Jones. Diaries, p. 251.)

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Ribbentrop encounters the feared difficulties in London

An assassination attempt had already been made on Edward VIII in July. However, the attempt on the monarch's life failed. Edward VII's independence was causing considerable headaches for the English ruling class. The smoldering crisis between the monarch and the "establishment" would have come to a head sooner or later anyway. At least, that was the view of the Duke of Windsor, who gave an interview to The Times on January 14, 1970. In it, he said:

"The Duke of Windsor stated yesterday evening that a clash between him and the establishment would have been inevitable even if he had not married Mrs. Wallis Simpson.

When asked if he regretted no longer being king, he replied: 'No, I would have liked to have done so, but I wanted to do it on my own terms, so I have no regrets. But I have the greatest interest in my country... which is England, your country and mine, and I wish it well.'"

Regarding the period from January 20 to December 10, 1936, the day he abdicated as king, the Duke stated that he had not so much sought to be a king of reforms as a contemporary (up-to-date) king who was in tune with the times. He had wanted to change the court ceremonial, but he was also concerned about social problems. When asked by Harris when he realized that his different views on the monarchy would bring him into conflict with the government of the time, the Duke replied: "Well, that was actually before I became king. I had organized a trip to visit the areas affected by the emergency. I traveled to Wales, to various parts of England, and also to the north of Northumberland. When Stanley Baldwin heard about this trip, he called me to the House of Commons and said he would like to talk to me about it. He asked, 'Why are you going there? Aren't there a lot of other important things to do? No,' I said, 'I think it's very important to find out how we can get these men out of unemployment. Some of them have been out of work for ten years." Now Mr. Baldwin suddenly seemed to realize that he and his government had actually done very little to alleviate the plight of the unemployed. He therefore asked, "Who suggested that you go there?" I replied, "I am actually going with the support of Sir Alexan-

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Leith, president of the Conservative Society in Northumberland. Oh, said Baldwin, a splendid man, a great friend of mine. I am happy, and I wish you a good journey. At the time, Baldwin was Prime Minister. He seemed to want to draw me into politics, perhaps a little too much, because politics is precisely what the Royal Family should avoid, however much they may wish to express their own views.

When asked what he understood by "the Establishment," the Duke replied:

"Well, until about 15 years ago, establishment was a new word for me, and I asked acquaintances to explain it to me. It's a rather obscure word that's not easy to define. It must have always existed and probably means authority—the authority of the legislature, the church, and to a certain extent the monarch. Also the universities and perhaps the high-ranking officers of the navy and army. In an article

I read a few years ago, it said that Prince Philip is not really a member of the establishment, i.e., that he very much goes his own way."

The Duke of Windsor was not either, in other words, he was not a supporter of the establishment. I think that is very true, the Duke explained. In contrast, his father, George V, and also his brother, George VI, had been, but I was independent, he explained.

The Duke recalled that after his abdication, he had held the post of Governor of the Bahamas for five years. After that, he had offered his services but had not been given any office. When asked why he had not been given any work, the Duke replied that others would have to be asked, but that most of the people who had prevented it were now dead and buried.

The not-so-puritanical representatives of the "establishment" suddenly developed unexpectedly virtuous ideas. About

The real bone of contention, however, was the king's desire for independence. It would have been difficult to win him over to an anti-German policy, and without his signature, no war could be waged.

. (Prof. Fiedler, companion of the Prince of Wales – Pte: Edward VIII in a personal conversation with Mayor Krogmann, see diary, April 14, 1936.) In December, Edward VIII abdicated. "I regret this very much," Krogmann wrote in his diary, "because the king was not anti-German. I believe that an understanding could easily have been reached through him."

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." Hitler and Ribbentrop shared this disappointment. (Krogmann diary, December 10, 1936.) (J. v. Ribbentrop. Between London and Moscow, p. 101 and R. Jordan, "Erlebt und Erlitten" [Experienced and Suffered], p. 192.)

Since Edward VII's declaration in favor of German-English reconciliation between front-line soldiers, an "automatic smear campaign" against the monarch had begun in the English press. Edward VIII had been shattered by the anti-German forces, as was confirmed by a senior court official. His efforts to achieve a German-English settlement had created "two very powerful enemies" for him in England. (Ribbentrop to Hitler and von Neurath. London, December 11, 1936. No. 304.) But it was not only the anti-German British "establishment" that had brought down the monarch, but also the anti-German forces in the

United States had already launched a storm against him at an early stage.

United States had already sounded the charge against him at an early stage. The worldwide campaign against a German-English understanding, of which the monarch had become the symbolic figure, had won the first battle against the desired peace order. As Duke of Windsor, Edward VIII knew exactly the forces that had orchestrated his downfall. In a personal conversation with the American ambassador George S. Messersmith in Vienna in 1937, the Duke of Windsor said bluntly: "I am here today because of the American press." (Messersmith estate. Unpublished memoirs. Excerpts in private possession.)

Ribbentrop knew that the king's abdication would also be a blow to the American president.

Ribbentrop knew that the king's abdication also meant a nie-

defeat for him and his London mission: "I do not believe that Edward VIII had expected from the outset that he would have to abdicate. He was too self-confident a sovereign for that."

defeat for him and his mission in London: "I do not believe that Edward VIII had expected from the outset that he would have to abdicate. He was too self-confident a sovereign for that. But when his stubbornness brought powerful forces in politics and the church to bear against him, the limits of British royal power became apparent.... The Anglo-German cause was one possibility poorer with the abdication of Edward VIII. It had lost a factor on the English side that had been one of the reasons for my dispatch to London." (J. v. Ribbentrop, "Between London and Moscow." p. 101f. Also Woermann's analysis. Memorandum. Secret. O.G. Sargent, December 18, 1936. FO 371/20734, C 448.)

Ribbentrop's ambassadorial duties were further complicated by

; bentrop was confronted with the political repercussions of the Spanish Civil War in London. Upon his appointment in Bayreuth in the summer of 1936, he had warned Hitler: "We would do better to

; bentrop was confronted with the political repercussions of the Spanish Civil War in London. Upon his appointment in Bayreuth in the summer of 1936, he had warned Hitler: "We would do better to stay out of Spanish affairs, because there are

/us no laurels. Spain is a very hot potato for us." But Hitler "emphatically stuck to his opposite opinion" because he saw a threatening danger in the fact that "Bolshevism could gain a foothold in Spain." In accordance with his instructions, Ribbentrop represented Hitler's view in London and encountered British-French-Soviet cooperation in the Non-Intervention Committee, which dealt with the Spanish question at the international level and to which Ribbentrop belonged as representative of the Reich. ' The English government circles did not understand Germany's anti-Soviet policy, or they did not want to understand it. The British interpreted the rearmament of the Wehrmacht, which was directed against the great military power of Russia, as being aimed at them. In March 1937, Chamberlain, then Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Baldwin cabinet, sent a reply to his American counterpart, Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau Jr., in which he addressed the fear of Germany:

"The main source of this fear of war in Europe is Germany. No other country, neither Italy, which is fully occupied with consolidating its conquest of Abyssinia, nor Russia with all its military preparations, certainly not France and England, nor other small powers, can at present be accused of aggressive intentions. But the impetuous, constantly repeated propaganda of the German press and radio under the direction of Dr. Goebbels, the vehemence and persistence of German military rearmament—from zero—have greatly alarmed all its neighbors. Even these islands, which can be reached in less than an hour from Germany by an air force equipped with hundreds of bombs, cannot free themselves from this fear. The motive for Germany's readiness to attack seems to spring from the desire to make itself so strong that no one will dare to resist its demands, whether in Europe or in its colonies. With this intention in mind, it is unlikely to agree to any disarmament that stands in the way of its aims. The only consideration that could prompt it to take the opposite decision would be the conviction that its power to maintain its supremacy is threatened by stronger forces and that the world would oppose it if it attempted an attack." (Chamberlain to Morgenthau. March 1937. Reprinted in: John M. Blum: From the Morgenthau Diaries, Vol. I: Years of Hope, 1928-1938. Boston 1959, p. 458ff.; the original correspondence is in the Franklin Roosevelt Estate, Hyde Park, New York:

Roosevelt Papers, PSFI, Diplomatic Correspondence, Great Britain 1933-1937, Box 7; excerpt in Anthony Eden's memoirs: Facing The Dictators, p. 526£.)

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Despite a number of setbacks, Ribbentrop remained firmly committed to the course he had set in 1937. No effort was too great in the pursuit of the hoped-for German-British reconciliation and friendship. But a quiet skepticism about whether this goal could be achieved at all crept into his reports. Ribbentrop had told Halifax that the shape of German-British relations would determine the future of global politics. Political security between the two nations could only be guaranteed by two things: a clear definition of the current vital interests of both countries at sea and on land. The first problem had already been solved by the naval agreement. The second question could be settled by a guarantee treaty for the so-called "low countries"—Holland and Belgium—and perhaps by Western peace guarantees based on this. By setting these guarantees in a treaty, any real cause for war between England and Germany would be eliminated. Strong forces opposed this vision of peace. But sooner or later, England would also have to make a decision: Ribbentrop appealed to the proverbial sobriety of British statesmen to make a decision that would serve England's interests. Halifax's brief reply that he had similar thoughts was commented on by Ribbentrop: "The extent to which this is really the case remains to be seen." (Ribbentrop to Hitler and von Neurath. London, February 14, 1937. B. 433.)

Over the coming weeks and months, Ribbentrop's doubts about England's sincerity in wanting to engage in positive talks with Germany grew to become almost a certainty. Even his two discussions with Foreign Minister Eden did not dispel these doubts. On the contrary! (Ribbentrop to the Reich Chancellor and Reich Foreign Minister. London, February 26, 1937. No. 112; Ribbentrop to the Führer and Reich Foreign Minister. London, March 13, 1937. No. 157.)

Two months after Ribbentrop took up his post as ambassador in London, the first rumors began to circulate that his mission was an "absolute failure." Bullitt reported from Paris, claiming to have learned this from "various reliable sources." "Even Hitler is beginning to view Ribbentrop's policy of appeasement toward England with suspicion," the American ambassador informed his superior at the State Department, Assistant Secretary R. Walton Moore, on January 8, 1937. It had already been recognized that the British flirtation

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was based solely on Germany's desire to gain time for the British armament program. He also told Bullitt-Moore of British fears that Paris and Berlin might agree on the return of colonies. However, England was determined to go to extremes to sabotage such talks, because this would inevitably raise the question of the return of the colonies "appropriated by the British during the period of the Treaty of Versailles." (Bullitt to R. Walton Moore, January 8, 1937. Moore Papers, Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York, USA.)

Coronation report

Hitler had recognized the "insincerity and hypocrisy" of the English with regard to the German colonies. He drew his first conclusions from his previous experiences with London's obstructionist policy. He had Ribbentrop tell the English: "... He would no longer tolerate the excesses of the British press, such as the questionnaire." (Krogmann Diary, May 5, 1937.)

Ribbentrop did not allow himself to be distracted by the friendly atmosphere surrounding the coronation in May 1937. After the festivities, everyday political life would resume. He urged Hitler to maintain a "healthy dose of skepticism" toward British policy. Ribbentrop would only believe in change "when the English signature is on a treaty instrument acceptable to us, whether on specific issues or in a broad, general, direct German-English agreement." Only a relatively small ruling class determined the fate of the British Empire. The "ruling elite" was extremely self-confident. It pursued its goals with unyielding determination. Ribbentrop had very little regard for the English willingness to compromise. Rhetorical commitments and empty phrases were largely a facade concealing intransigence, harshness, and selfishness. Field Marshal von Blomberg, who attended the celebrations as the German representative at Ribbentrop's express request – Hitler did not want to send either Göring or Neurath to London because of the events in Spain – was able to chalk up a personal success. Ribbentrop hoped that this would have a positive impact on German-English relations. But even the Reich Minister of War had to sense that London

was unwilling to budge from his position. In a detailed discussion between Eden and Blomberg on colonial, Western Pact, and disarmament issues, the British foreign minister showed little willingness to compromise. The differences also came to the fore again in their assessment of Spain. (Eden Memorandum, for the information of Ambassador Henderson, May 13, 1937. No. 609. FO 371/20735, C 35555.) These conclusions were obvious to Ribbentrop and were reflected in his eleven-page "coronation report" to Hitler and Neurath. In a mixture of mood description and objective political analysis, he summarized his impressions, which are published in this book for the first time:

German Embassy

London, May 21, 1937.

A 2276

Contents: Coronation report and current situation
Contents: Coronation report and current situation

1 double copy sent directly to the Führer and Reich Chancellor 3 double copies for the Foreign Office

The coronation celebrations in London, which come to an end today with the fleet parade at Spithead, were an impressive demonstration of the commitment of the English people and the British Empire to the monarchy. The coronation ceremony, consisting of the king's comprehensive oaths (program to follow by courier), the simultaneous placing of the royal crown, peer crowns, etc., reaffirm that the king is primarily a symbolic figure without actual sovereign rights or, as the English themselves describe him, a "figurehead" of the ruling class in its politics toward the people, in close agreement with the church organizations. I will report separately on the internal structure and distribution of power within the English government apparatus in the near future.

The coronation was perhaps even more than an English celebration; it was a celebration of the British Empire, for which the crown is the visible symbol of unity. However, as the king emphasized in his radio address, this was the first time that the Dominions (of which Ireland, as is well known,

) appeared as independent sister nations. The Empire Conference meeting that began during coronation week was adjourned until the end of the week.

), appeared as independent sister nations. The Empire Conference, which began during coronation week, underlined

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deletes this connection. We will pay particular attention to this conference. Although its foreign policy section is strictly confidential, it may be possible to learn something that will allow conclusions to be drawn 1. about the position of the Dominions on British foreign policy to date and 2. about Britain's future intentions toward us. At first glance, it seems clear that, despite some loosening in recent years, the structure of the British Empire is still firmly anchored in London and that England is determined to strengthen the bonds within the empire through rearmament, a plan for the defense of the empire, the defense committee established today, and other organizational measures. We can therefore expect the structure of the British Empire to be strengthened rather than weakened in the coming years.

Field Marshal von Blomberg made the best possible impression with his chivalrous nature and open military manner. He was honored on several occasions by the king, queen, and other influential figures, and was met with personal warmth from all sides.

The Field Marshal held numerous meetings, partly at my residence and partly on other occasions, with influential English figures, in particular with members of the cabinet such as Baldwin, Neville Chamberlain, Eden, Halifax, Inskip, Duff Cooper, and Hoare, as well as with Winston Churchill. The conversations with the former are recorded in notes prepared by Legation Councilor Schmidt.

The general tenor of these discussions was the widespread desire that a path to understanding must be found between Germany and England. However, the English statesmen did not go into detail about how this understanding could be achieved.

It should be noted that the discussion with Eden was not particularly fruitful with regard to moving forward on the Western Pact issue or the Belgian question. The colonial question was touched upon briefly. Eden seemed to see more difficulties than possibilities. It should be noted that Eden again raised the idea, already reported, of calling for a ceasefire in the Spanish Civil War. I refer to special telegrams. The colonial question was also touched upon in the other discussions and commented on in both a positive and a negative sense.

The field marshal's meeting with the British Minister of Defense, Inskip, at Lord Astor's residence was particularly friendly, which confirms my own experience with Inskip last year. I believe that Inskip's influence in the coming cabinet will be even more significant than it has been in the past. Many people

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believe that he will become prime minister in the future. Inskip is undoubtedly well disposed toward Germany, and the embassy will be keen to maintain relations with Inskip, who is a close friend of our

friends Lothian-Astor.

During the coronation celebrations, both at events outside and inside the embassy, it was clear that every effort was made to treat the German delegation and representatives in a courteous and friendly manner in every respect.

The German press gratefully highlighted the echo of the coronation week on numerous occasions.

I also had numerous discussions with influential English personalities. They were mostly quite friendly, including Eden and Vansittart, with whom the embassy has established a pleasant relationship on a purely personal level. According to my latest information, there has been little change in these gentlemen's well-known attitude toward German interests. According to strictly confidential information, Nevile Henderson was not very enthusiastic about his future activities in Germany after his first meetings at the Foreign Office. However, his subsequent meeting with Neville Chamberlain is said to have strengthened his resolve to work toward understanding with us. I also believe that we can rightly place certain hopes in the new Prime Minister. I have heard confidentially that he wants to keep Eden as Foreign Secretary, but take a stronger hand in foreign policy himself. In this context, a conversation with Neville Chamberlain deserves special mention. I told Chamberlain that it seemed to me that the future of the world depended primarily on the shape of German-British relations, that is, whether our two countries would drift apart and ultimately find themselves in opposing camps, or whether we would truly become friends, for which all the prerequisites were in place. I had been sent here by the Führer to help achieve the latter goal. To this, the otherwise dry Chamberlain replied spontaneously and cordially, "that he would be at my disposal one hundred percent in the future in this task."

All this must not, of course, lead to talk of a serious reappraisal of German problems and wishes in English government circles. The talks between German and English representatives are also reflected, for example, in numerous satisfactory discussions mentioned in the press which other foreign statesmen have held with influential English personalities. For this reason,

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The friendly atmosphere in which the German-English discussions took place should not be viewed one-sidedly.

England's policy toward Germany—insofar as it is currently clearly discernible—can probably be summarized as follows:

1. As a saturated nation, England wants peace above all else.

2. A guilty conscience about the plundering of Germany, Germany's tremendous rise in power, its hostile stance toward Bolshevik Russia, and the increasingly pressing problems in the east and southeast make Germany appear to be a likely aggressor. Its good relations with Italy and Japan reinforce this impression.

3. The collective security of the League of Nations has failed, and it is becoming increasingly clear that collective security cannot be relied upon in an emergency.

4. England's guarantees to Belgium and France have so far been the cornerstones of English policy in Europe. An attack in the west would always find England on the side of our enemies. That leaves the eastern question.

5. England does not want to commit itself with regard to the East. In fact, however, it is strongly involved in the French alliance system through its guarantee to France and the French guarantee to Russia, i.e., it is indirectly linked to the East. This is further underlined by its continued moral support for the Franco-Russian pact, i.e., by its support for France's desire for hegemony in Europe, which is expressed through France's alliance with Russia. As things stand today, there is a danger that in the event of a Russian-German conflict, England will somehow be drawn into the war against Germany by France (there are plenty of methods for doing this: Havas' false reports, false claims of aggression, acts of sabotage, etc., etc.). The only clear way to prevent this would be an unequivocal English assurance of neutrality in the event of a German-Russian war. This would, in all likelihood, secure us in the West, because without English military aid, France would hardly dare to attack the German western fortifications. The key to the situation therefore lies exclusively with England, which is faced with the alternative of, on the one hand, friendship with Germany while fully safeguarding English interests (fleet agreement, willingness to secure the integrity of the countries between Germany and England, including France) and, on the other hand, another life-and-death struggle between the two great Germanic nations for what are essentially foreign interests, a struggle which, under certain circumstances, would have to be fought by England in a much less favorable constellation than in 1914 and which would in any case threaten the existence of the British Empire.

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If the English statesmen make the right choice, the future of the empire will not be put at risk.

However, as a very reliable confidant confirmed to me again today, the Foreign Office's argument is still as follows: if Germany were to emerge victorious in a war with Russia, it would be so strong that it could do whatever it wanted with Europe and then, one day, with England. This argument, which is based on Germany's alleged desire for world domination and fundamentally denies Germany's ability to live as a contented, saturated nation, must be refuted with all the means and arguments at our disposal, by doing everything in our power to influence the new English cabinet, for this is the only thing that can overturn the traditional attitude of the Foreign Office since the memorandum of the German-hater Sir Eyre Crowe in 1907, which has become a kind of creed for the Foreign Office. Our counterarguments include, among others, that a satisfied Germany, like England today, could only have an interest in preserving its possessions, and furthermore that Germany itself, as the most powerful state in Europe, could not only have no interest in ever going against England, but on the contrary, would have the greatest interest in preserving the British Empire, whose heir it could never become. and furthermore that once the two Germanic nations had found each other and reached a lasting agreement, they would not only uphold it in Germanic loyalty, but would also stand together out of prudence for the preservation of their common race and their possessions in the world, are gradually finding more and more attentive listeners. Further intensive work will be necessary to win England over to a clear disinterest in the East. Lord Lothian will make the first move in two very significant articles in The Times next Monday and Tuesday. Furthermore, Lord Rothermere tells me that in a few days he will begin a major series of articles entitled "A German-English alliance is the only means of preventing world war." Further actions in this direction are being prepared by the embassy. I would like

to report verbally in Berlin in the course of the coming month on how we might proceed tactically at the appropriate time, once sufficient preparations have been made.

Despite the ongoing press attacks on Germany in recent times, there is undoubtedly a desire among many influential figures for an understanding with Germany on a realistic basis, and this desire may even be growing in some quarters. In this context, I would also refer to telegram no. 277 of May 18 concerning the visit of British dignitaries to Germany.

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The embassy will systematically continue these attempts to win over influential circles and individuals. It is important, first of all, to maintain the favorable atmosphere surrounding the coronation in everyday political life and to prepare for possible negotiations between England

and us. Then, in my opinion, the moment will and must come for us in the foreseeable future when the atmosphere is such that we can put England to the final test with regard to its attitude toward the German necessities of life and its true intentions toward us. It should then no longer be possible to say that the atmosphere is not yet ripe for positive

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agreements, etc., as is so often heard at present. If this test nevertheless ends negatively, then the proof of England's desire to encircle Germany will have been provided, and we will then have to draw the necessary conclusions without compromise. I would also like to report verbally on how we might proceed further to this end and what proposals we might make to England at the appropriate time.

In the meantime, despite the friendly atmosphere surrounding the coronation, we would do well to maintain a healthy dose of skepticism and to do everything in our power to strengthen our other friendships along the lines we have pursued, without permanently blocking the British path. Personally, I will only believe that a change has taken place when the English signature appears on a treaty instrument that is acceptable to us, whether it concerns Belgium, the Western Pact, the colonies, or even a broad general direct agreement between Germany and England. The Embassy will continue to work by all means towards German-British friendship, while naturally taking our friendships with Italy and Japan into account in every way. This work certainly cannot be described as hopeless, because British public opinion is mostly well disposed towards Germany, and it is therefore a matter of winning over the leading class. In what form such a German-British friendly rapprochement— given the firm and, in my opinion, inseparable relationship between England and France — unless a Bolshevization of the latter changes all calculations from the ground up — and how the Eastern questions might be separated from the Western peacekeeping efforts, I would also like to present my views orally there next month.

The Field Marshal and I also had the opportunity to hold numerous talks with foreign statesmen and princes who are here. The French Foreign Minister, Delbos, expressed to me in my home what I considered to be almost exaggerated warmth for an understanding between France and Germany. There were no discussions of specific issues. When Delbos heard that I

wanted to see the Paris World Exhibition in June, he invited me to a frank discussion on this occasion, which I accepted. Incidentally, I remain of the opinion, and this opinion is confirmed once again by news from various sources, that we cannot reach acceptable agreements with the current French government.

In summary, it can be said that the Field Marshal's visit was a great personal success for Mr. von Blomberg and that this visit therefore served to promote German-English relations in general in the best possible way.

Despite his strong reservations and doubts about English sincerity, which were expressed in his coronation report, Ribbentrop continued to promote understanding of the German position in English government circles.

The first, albeit cautious, steps toward his later concept of a global political tripartite coalition—as a counterweight to potential aggressors—can already be discerned in Ribbentrop's coronation report. What was only vaguely discernible in May took shape six months later in his main report, "London A 5522," and his "Conclusions," forming a well-rounded picture. Although he reported to Hitler in May 1937 with obvious skepticism about the further development of German-British relations, he probably still hoped that the British statesmen would decide (in their own best interests) to adopt a reasonable attitude toward Germany. But his warnings not to set hopes too high cannot have failed to have some influence on Hitler.

In order to break the deadlock in official relations, Ribbentrop now proposed improving the atmosphere through personal exchanges of ideas and direct contacts. He had already arranged for numerous leading British figures to pay private visits to Germany. Ribbentrop "warmly recommended" that "each and every one of these persons" be received by the Führer. A long list of visitors followed: Baldwin, who would soon hand over his office as Prime Minister to Neville Chamberlain; Lord Derby, who was in close contact with Ribbentrop (see Ribbentrop's report to Hitler and Neurath. London, February 20, 1937. A 718); Defense Minister Inskip, who had repeatedly expressed his desire for a settlement; even Winston Churchill, whose conversion "into a friend of Germany may yet succeed, and for which, in personal communications with the embassy

"certain signs seem to have been apparent for some time"; Ribbentrop also hoped that a visit by Canadian Prime Minister MacKenzie King would have a positive effect on German-British relations. In his report, he emphasized the "pro-German" attitude of the Canadian statesman, whose visit he considered "particularly important in view of the significance of the Dominions for British foreign policy."

At the Imperial Conference in the summer of 1937, warning voices were raised, especially from South Africa, not to overplay the cards with Germany. Under the immediate impression of demands to seek a compromise with Germany and to avoid military involvement on the European continent at all costs, Chamberlain finally made his tactical shift toward Berlin. The risk of alienating the Dominions was still too great. In a future confrontation with the Reich, London was dependent on the help of its empire. These considerations played an important role for Chamberlain at the time. While he was reluctant to respond to the objections of the Dominions, he tactically adapted his foreign policy to this line, hoping that Ribbentrop would be able to use the positive attitude of the Dominions to achieve a

general settlement of German-British relations. Ribbentrop also wanted to win over prominent figures in British economic life for his project. Sir Alexander Walker, "a man of not insignificant influence in economic circles," had agreed to travel to Berlin. Lord Arnold, a "frequent advocate of German interests in the House of Lords," had also promised to do his part. Even "our old enemy, Mr. Gerard," the former American ambassador to Berlin until the United States entered the war in the spring of 1917, seemed to have been won over to Ribbentrop's peace policy. On the occasion of the coronation celebrations in London, he had informed Field Marshal von Blomberg of his decision "to bury the past and work for a future of German-American friendship." At the conclusion of these exploratory visits and at the same time as the prelude to a new phase in German-British relations, Ribbentrop proposed a "possible" visit by Lord Halifax, "whom I would prefer to see in Germany for more positive negotiations at a later date, after the atmosphere has been further clarified by the other visitors." (Ribbentrop to Hitler and Neurath. London, May 18, 1937. Top secret. No. 277.)

England plays for time

England plays for time The failed Neurath visit

The Imperial Conference convened on May 14, 1937. There, opposition to Eden and Chamberlain's policy toward Germany became vocal. (S. C. M. von der Heever: General J. B.M. Hertzog. Johannesburg 1946, p. 270£.) Chamberlain therefore had to demonstrate to the Dominions his willingness to seek a compromise with Germany. After a few weeks, the prime minister made the first tactical shift toward his new foreign policy line. Through Ambassador Henderson, Eden had already made contact with Neurath and invited the German foreign minister to visit the British capital "in the near future." On June 5, the British foreign minister asked Ribbentrop to come to the Foreign Office for talks and revealed this plan to him. He began by emphasizing that Neurath's visit was intended merely as a general exchange of ideas. German-British negotiations would continue to be conducted through official diplomatic channels. Eden mentioned the Spanish question as the main topic of discussion, but said that other foreign policy issues could also be raised.

Although Ribbentrop welcomed a general exchange of ideas, he had quiet doubts about the advisability of this suddenly planned German visit. He feared that the foreign minister's trip to London would raise expectations that were too high to be fulfilled. He pointed out to Eden that Hitler expected positive results and therefore raised the question of whether it would not be more appropriate to send a British minister to Berlin, which Eden rejected.

The British foreign minister emphasized that it was "of the utmost importance" to make it clear that Neurath's planned visit was not intended to open official negotiations on outstanding issues. Informal talks, as Eden had in mind – and he expressed this view clearly – would not necessarily lead to any agreement between the two governments. Ribbentrop feared that London merely wanted to give the impression of being open to discussion in order to later confront Germany with a possible negative

burden the outcome of the talks in the eyes of the world. But Ribbentrop declared himself "one hundred percent in favor" of establishing contact at the ministerial level. Immediately upon his return to Germany, he wanted to present the British proposal to Hitler, because Eden "doubted whether Neurath had even informed the Reich Chancellor of the British invitation." At the end of his conversation with

the British foreign minister, Ribbentrop once again unambiguously expressed his willingness to support Neurath's visit. (Eden to Henderson. London, June 5, 1937. No. 694. FO 371/20748, C 4076.)

This popular London trick of insinuating that the Chancellor was not informed about everything was repeatedly used against Ribbentrop in 1938, for example on the basis of whisperings from German conspirators such as Captain Wiedemann, Hitler's personal adjutant.

After his conversation with Eden, Ribbentrop flew to Berlin. On June 10, he returned to London and immediately contacted the Foreign Office. He informed Eden that he had discussed the planned Neurath visit in detail with Hitler. Berlin welcomed the English initiative. He himself considered the matter "very useful." However, a calendar of topics for discussion should be set in advance. The general international situation should be the main subject of the talks. (Ribbentrop to Hitler. London, June 10, 1937. No. 323; Eden to Henderson. London, June 5, 1937. No. 717. FO 371/20748, C 1170.)

Although the invitation to Neurath had long since been issued, Eden did not instruct the Foreign Office to give more detailed consideration to the topics for discussion until June 13. Sir G. Mounsey advised against making the Spanish question the focus of the talks. This complex issue should continue to be dealt with within the framework of the Non-Intervention Committee. Portugal, France, and Soviet Russia would immediately react with suspicion if Eden officially made Spain a topic of discussion with Neurath. In addition, Italian fears that the Berlin-Rome axis could be broken up via Spain would be reinforced (ibid.).

In a second conversation after his return from Berlin, Ribbentrop asked Eden whether the Foreign Office had now determined the points to be discussed in London. Eden replied that "he had Foreign Minister

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von Neurath had him inform him that he considered it appropriate, when announcing the visit, not to speak of negotiations, but only of a friendly exchange of views on questions of interest to both nations. In the course of his repeated discussions with Eden, Ribbentrop sensed the somewhat difficult situation in which he found himself. From the outset, the Wilhelmstraße had kept him in the dark. It seemed as if the Foreign Office had deliberately imposed a news blackout on him in order to discredit him as a negotiating partner. He touched on this subject in a personal message to Neu- rath. In all his talks in London, he had felt "how disadvantageous it is when the embassy is not kept informed about negotiations between the Foreign Office and the British Embassy in Berlin." He had only learned of Neurath's invitation from Eden. Wilhelmstrasse had not informed him of the contacts that had already been made. He had also only learned about the "negotiations now being conducted in Berlin and the details of the Foreign Minister's visit" from Eden. Ribbentrop left no doubt that the impression being formed in London was "detrimental to our policy." He urged Neurath to keep him informed. UEDEEIND to Neurath. London, June 15, 1937. No. 332.)

Neurath himself made no secret of his antipathy toward Ribbentrop, whom he already considered his rival at that time, in his correspondence with foreign diplomats. In his conversations with Henderson's predecessor at the British Embassy in Berlin, Sir Eric Phipps, he is said to have openly expressed his hopes of being able to use any alleged "failure" on Ribbentrop's part to strengthen his own position. (Sir Eric Phipps to Eden. Berlin, April 14, 1937. No. 246. FO 371/20732.) Count Albrecht Bernstorff,

who shuttled back and forth between Berlin and London as a liaison for the anti-Hitler circles, confided to the English diplomat Stevenson that Neurath was observing Ribbentrop's "failures" "with satisfaction." The foreign minister was merely waiting for the moment when the German ambassador in London would "completely discredit himself." (Memorandum. R.S. Skrine Stevenson. June 15, 1937. FO 371/20733.) Neurath did not hide his dislike of Ribbentrop from Henderson either. Neurath, who had since been replaced, "hated" his successor Ribbentrop "like the plague," the British ambassador wrote to Sir Alexander Cadogan in May 1938. (Henderson to Cadogan. Private letter. Berlin, May 29, 1938. FO 800/269.)

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The planned visit by Neurath was canceled after several torpedo attacks by a submarine on the cruiser Leipzig off Oran on June 15 and 18. Ribbentrop was instructed to oppose these incidents in the Non-Intervention Committee. German-British tensions escalated once again. State Secretary von Mackensen informed Ambassador Henderson that the German foreign minister's visit would have to be postponed in view of the situation "arising from the repeated Red Spanish attacks on German warships." (Mackensen memo, No. 33.)

Goerdeler in London

"What did Goerdeler tell you?" asked S.D. Waley from the Ministry of Finance at the end of June 1937 to F.T.A. Ashton-Gwatkin, head of the Economic Department at the Foreign Office. Who was this mysterious visitor who, during those eventful weeks in London, established initial contacts with government agencies and prominent figures in English political life? What mission had Carl Goerdeler been entrusted with, and what forces in Germany had sent him to London as their representative?

In the spring of 1937, Goerdeler had finally stepped down from the official German political stage. He had ended his role as prize commissioner and mayor of Leipzig. In Berlin, Goerdeler had coordinated his new plan of action with conspiratorial circles within the Wehrmacht leadership and government agencies. His travel plans, which he coordinated with Ludwig Beck, the chief of the German General Staff, took him via Brussels to London and on to a lightning visit to Berlin. From there he returned to London, then set off for The Hague, Amsterdam, Paris, Toronto, and Washington. At the same time, Beck established contact with political and military circles in France. In the summer, he visited Paris and held detailed secret talks with the French Chief of Staff Gamelin, Marshal Pétain, and Prime Minister Daladier. (S. Gerhard Ritter: Carl Goerdeler und die Deutsche Widerstandsbewegung. Stuttgart 1954, pp. 141, 152ff.)

The head of German military intelligence, Admiral Canaris, secured protection for Goerdeler's mission from the German government. The Minister of Economics and President of the Reichsbank, Hjalmar Schacht, provided the necessary foreign currency and opened doors for Goerdeler.

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to English financial and economic circles. Under the pretext of wanting to gauge the attitude of foreign circles toward Germany, Goerdeler obtained the support of Göring, who urged him to display a "patriotic attitude" in England. This cleared the last obstacles. Goerdeler, who had been suspected of treason, regained possession of his passport. (Colvin: Vansittart in Office, p. 150.)

In mid-June 1937, Goerdeler arrived in London. In the British capital, he was received by the Governor of the Bank of England, Montague Norman, Foreign Minister Eden, Secretary of State Sir Robert Vansittart, Lord Halifax, and Winston Churchill. In countless conversations, he made his position clear on behalf of the Berlin conspirators. Although Goerdeler did not meet with the British Prime Minister in person, Chamberlain was privy to the plans through his close associates and confidants, probably via Halifax or Ashton-Gwatkin. (Colvin: Vansittart...., p. 155.) The former prize commissioner informed British government circles of the German conspirators' plans for a coup and at the same time expressed his hope that the plans for a revolution would be received favorably. This tenor pervaded all his conversations in London and in other capitals.

Goerdeler made an impression on the head of the Economic Department at the Foreign Office, Ashton-Gwatkin, as an "honest fellow" who promised his British interlocutors a comprehensive solution to all outstanding problems as soon as the "right people" had taken control in Berlin. The blow against the regime was not yet planned for 1937, but was to be carried out "perhaps next year." Goerdeler described the economic situation in the Reich as "bad," but not yet "hopeless." Regardless of economic developments, however, the coup plans would be put into action. The cost of living was rising and the quality of consumer goods was steadily deteriorating. But this situation, although "serious," would not yet trigger a "revolution." Goerdeler left open the question of whether the internal political struggle would lead to violent or peaceful conflict, as everything depended on the "Reichswehr"; its final decision would be decisive. At present, the leading circles of the Wehrmacht were still cautious and waiting to see what would happen. Great hopes were being placed on the conspiratorial circles.

on Göring, who was "simply an angel." Even Hitler seemed acceptable at times. The real "evil influence" came from Himmler and the "Nazi bosses." The first strike should be directed against these forces. In his conversations with the British diplomat Stopford and the Ministry of Finance official Waley, Goerdeler repeatedly emphasized the "inevitable clash between Hitler and the conspirators." He was unable to give any definite information about the date of the coup. Once he spoke of months, another time of years. But one impression must have become indelibly fixed in the minds of his English interlocutors: the mob plan for the coup was already underway. (S. Ashton-Gwatkin to Waley, June 25; Waley to Ashton-Gwatkin, June 24 and July 7, 1937. FO 371/20733, C 4714.)

Goerdeler's mission to London brought life to the Foreign Office. His open and veiled hints of a coup had an electrifying effect. The transcript of the conversation between Times correspondent A. E. Barker and the traveler involved in the conspiracy sparked heated discussions among leading Foreign Office officials. The information that Barker provided under the seal of secrecy so as not to endanger Goerdeler gave a precise insight into the latter's activities and at the same time shed a sharper light on the people behind him for whom he was speaking.

Goerdeler suddenly interrupted his stay in London on June 20, 1937, and paid a lightning visit to his co-conspirators in Berlin. He stayed there only a few hours and made contact with his friends in the army. He informed them about his mission so far and at the same time received new instructions. In Berlin, he also visited Göring, with whom he became embroiled in a "hour-long" conversation. According to Goerdeler, the head of the Four-Year Plan seemed extremely concerned about the "chaos" in which the regime found itself. Goerdeler even claimed to have gained the impression that Göring was expecting imminent chaos, which he was powerless to prevent. The regime seemed to be on the verge of "collapse." These were Goerdeler's wishful thoughts, which he spread abroad as truth in order

to give the impending coup a semblance of legitimacy. His conversation with Göring, whom Goerdeler naturally had to keep in the dark about his real intentions and ulterior motives, reinforced his view that the "German dictatorship" had only six to eight months left to live. He even reported that Hitler

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He claimed that he had been "forced" by his cabinet colleagues to leave a meeting early. The Führer had left Berlin to gather "architectural inspiration" in central Germany. Goerdeler told his eavesdropping Times listener that Hitler was "obsessed" with the idea of completely redesigning Berlin and Munich. In the heat of the conversation, Goerdeler even drew comparisons with Ludwig II of Bavaria. Goerdeler and his "friends in the General Staff" had come across evidence that the "extremist wing" under Himmler and Heydrich was planning an assassination attempt on Hitler. According to the British secret document, this news had prompted Goerdeler to contact the commander-in-chief of the army, General von Fritsch, during his lightning visit to Berlin and urge him to "set the army in motion immediately, because the time for a military coup had come." But Fritsch adopted a wait-and-see attitude. A coup seemed too early to him. "Public opinion was not ready, but it would be soon." Goerdeler's remarks gave Barker the impression that Fritsch "had given up all hope in the Führer and saw no place for him in a future regime." Goerdeler believed he was aware of the "international dangers" arising from this "explosive German situation." He was of the opinion that "there would be no war if France and England took a firm stance." Under these circumstances, a unique opportunity was also emerging for the Western powers. The plan for a coup could be accelerated. If "German-Italian policy" took a more aggressive course, France and England should "inflict a diplomatic defeat on Germany." This development would create an opportunity for the "moderate and military" circles in Germany to strike a blow against the regime. London and Paris would not take the slightest risk, because Goerdeler described Hitler's "war preparations" as a "colossal bluff." There was a lack of war material, weapons, and raw materials. In addition, the quality of military equipment was poor. Goerdeler warned against being impressed by the size of the German army under any circumstances. Even if Hitler and Mussolini were to respond to their diplomatic defeat with military action, "the military resistance could not last long." Only "Anglo-French weakness" would squander the unique opportunity to overthrow the systems of Hitler and Mussolini. In this

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Goerdeler saw this as the only danger. He urged the British: "Be prepared to close the Strait of Gibraltar, or at least threaten to do so, and make it clear that you are immune to any surprises." He reminded Barker that "the Nazis have a sense of anniversaries, and three are coming up: "The outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, the assassination of Dollfuß, and the outbreak of the European War in 1914." (Confidential note by A. E. Barker, July 4, 1937; FO 371/20733, C 4882.) '

Goerdeler's news triggered alarm. Sargent from the Foreign Office saw his information as confirmation of the reports arriving in London and rumors circulating about "a coup" against Austria or the "destruction of the Habsburg monarchy."

Goerdeler's messages triggered alarm. Sargent of the Foreign Office saw his information as confirmation of reports arriving in London and rumors circulating about "a coup" against Austria or Czechoslovakia "in the near future." Goerdeler's allusion to Hitler's tendency to use "anniversaries" as a prelude to foreign policy actions "depressed" Sargent. London had received initial indications that Goerdeler had been sent to England as a "secret envoy" and "representative" of the Reichswehr to inform "His Majesty's Government of the fears and wishes of the army, which contrast with those of

the party." The fact that the "Reichswehr considers it necessary to make contact is symptomatic in itself," commented Sargent. (Ibid. July 6, 1937, marginal note by Sargent.)

Although William Strang, head of the European Department at the Foreign Office, assumed that Goerdeler had exaggerated the situation in Germany, he could not shake the impression that "there is a high state of tension in Germany." He had recently learned from a Colonel Stotblack that "the explosive material for a civil war in Germany was lying around." But once the critical point had been reached, he hoped that the "Reichswehr and with it Göring" would act. Ivo Mallet of the Foreign Office, however, had "serious doubts" about Goerdeler's predictions. He considered it unlikely that the German army leadership already believed the time had come to remove Hitler. Contrary to Goerdeler's optimistic expectations, he believed that the army was still in a "wait-and-see" position at the moment. (Written commentary by I. Mallet, W. Strang, O. G. Sargent, and Alexander Cadogan.)

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Goerdeler-Vansittart secret talks

Sir R. Vansittart, who had been "fed" information about the poor economic and "political situation" by German conspiratorial circles since 1934, was still completely under the impression of Goerdeler's secret messages when he circulated his long memorandum in the Foreign Office. In all likelihood, Goerdeler's lengthy 17-page document was also presented to members of the British cabinet. Vansittart held two detailed talks with Goerdeler at the Foreign Office and in his private apartment. In Vansittart's opinion, the former Reich Commissioner was "an impressive person, wise and weighty, a man of intelligence and courage, a sincere patriot." He willingly provided information about the situation within Germany and also confirmed the reports on the German economy and armament situation that were constantly reaching Vansittart. The Foreign Office was kept up to date with material from German conspiratorial circles via the British legation in Prague and the embassy in Berlin. Goerdeler confirmed that the study

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representatives of German heavy industry, with the active participation of Vögler (Vereinigte Stahlwerke). General von Fritsch had requested this report at the beginning of the year in order to counteract excessive "optimism" in the British government.

representatives of German heavy industry, with the active participation of Vögler – Vereinigte Stahlwerke. General von Fritsch had requested this report at the beginning of the year in order to counter overly "overly optimistic" assessments of the situation and influence German army circles against the regime. Shortly before Goerdeler's arrival in London, another report had arrived. It was penned by Colonel Thomas, head of the Defense Economy Staff in the Reich War Ministry, and detailed the bottlenecks in Germany's raw materials supply. Goerdeler confirmed that this description reflected the economic situation. According to this, the implementation of the Four-Year Plan was facing considerable difficulties. As valuable as these confirmations of the available secret material may have been for Vansittart, the fact that Goerdeler had a "close relationship" with Fritsch and Beck and maintained "friendly" relations with Neurath was much more significant.

Goerdeler warned Vansittart not to base British policy toward the Reich government on "illusory hopes and false premises." The main task of his mission was to familiarize "responsible foreigners" with the "true" situation in the Reich, and he urged the Hitler government to refrain from

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not to upgrade their actions. Three facts could not be disputed, emphasized the former price commissioner: The Reich was heading inexorably toward economic and financial bankruptcy. The "moral struggle" against National Socialism would be fought in a "decisive battle." But at the same time, London should not harbor any false illusions. The dividing line did not run between the party and the German people, but through the middle of the National Socialist movement, from which the "sincere, honest, idealistic, and disillusioned people, including even some men from Hitler's immediate circle, were slowly breaking away. The human material is available with which we can build a new Germany and a new Europe, if we survive the collapse and the violent, decisive struggle that we must go through." In his conversations with Vansittart, Goerdeler repeatedly emphasized that "nothing would be worse for Germany and Europe than an artificial German-English compromise rooted in illusions." Wars and military entanglements were not imminent. Even if a military conflict threatened, the German General Staff would intervene immediately and prevent the outbreak of war. He again urged Vansittart to remain "patient and firm" and, above all, to "give the reasonable people in Germany a chance" and not to pursue a course that would thwart the conspirators' plans "without leading to a lasting agreement." (Memorandum, Sir Robert Vansittart. London, July 6, 1937. FO 371/29733, C 5933.) In the power struggle in Germany, the following political groups would emerge: 1. The moderates – i.e., the conspirators. 2. Hitler and Goebbels, who opposed a radical change in economic policy and at the same time toyed with the idea of embarking on foreign policy adventures if the economic difficulties worsened and if France were to collapse internally. Goebbels, Goerdeler reported to London, was making final preparations for a "violent anti-Czech campaign." Here, indications, fears, and predictions emerged that, just under three months later, on November 5, 1937, were put into Hitler's mouth by his adjutant in the so-called "Hossbach Protocol." The language used by the German conspirators had reached perfection. Colonel Hossbach, presumably in agreement with the Chief of the German General Staff, Ludwig Beck, accused the Reich Chancellor of

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Intentions and war plans that Goerdeler had already circulated in the summer of 1937. (For more on the key document "Hossbach Protocol," see A. von Ribbentrop: Critical Analysis, in: Conspiracy Against Peace, Chapter 1.) All the false statements, untrue assertions, and insinuations that were elevated to the status of key documents in the Nuremberg trials and used in postwar literature as evidence of aggressive German policy can be traced back to the conspirators' sources.

At the latest since Goerdeler's trip to London in the summer of 1937, the English government was under the influence of "secret information." The situation within Germany, as described by Stopford, the English liaison officer in Prague, in his handwritten letter to Ashton-Gwatkin, reflected the opinion of the conspirators. The power struggle, he reported, had broken out. Minister of Economics and Reichsbank President Schacht was already preparing for his new role as future Reich Chancellor in a monarchist German Reich, while Foreign Minister Neurath was torpedoing the strengthening of the Berlin-Rome axis. (Robert J. Stopford to Ashton-Gwatkin. Private. London, August 20, 1937. FO 371/20728, C 6031.)

Once on the trail, the English were driven forward by their instincts. London had received secret information from second and third hands that pointed to an imminent power struggle in the Reich capital. Goerdeler, encouraged by the head of the Four-Year Plan to adopt a "patriotic stance," had, in agreement with the Wehrmacht, presented Göring as the presumptive winner of the coming battle of the Diadochi. In London, the impression must have been created that the former Reich Price Commissioner was Göring's mouthpiece. There is no doubt that the British government leadership was greatly influenced by Goerdeler's secret reports. Influenced by all the dizzying secret reports flooding in, they encouraged Chamberlain to approve the Halifax trip to Germany in order to get a first-hand impression of the events that Goerdeler and his like-minded friends had described to the English government circles.

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"Keeping Germany guessing"

In May 1937, Ribbentrop had "warmly" recommended that Hitler receive a number of prominent figures from British political and economic circles. He hoped that these personal discussions would ease German-British relations. These visits were intended to prepare the ground for talks that could later be continued at a higher level. After the informal talks had been concluded, Lord Halifax was to travel to Germany "possibly" to discuss German-British relations personally with the Reich Chancellor. In November, Halifax set off for Germany on his "exploratory and cover-up mission," as Ribbentrop later characterized the visit in his "Conclusions." While Ribbentrop had been sent to London with the task of reaching a compromise with Great Britain, Halifax received completely opposite instructions for his visit to Germany. Chamberlain, who had repeatedly assured Ribbentrop of his "100 percent cooperation" in building German-English friendship (see Ribbentrop report of May 21, 1937 -- A 2276 and December 16, 1937 - No. 775), had Eden expressly instruct both Halifax before his departure and Sir Nevile Henderson, who was in London at the end of October, for their upcoming talks with Hitler: "We must keep Germany guessing about our attitude. We cannot do more as long as we are not strong enough to speak to Germany in no uncertain terms." (A. Eden: Facing The Dictators, p. 509.) As Eden's successor, Halifax continued this policy of concealment without restriction. (Halifax to Harvey, in Oliver Harvey's Diaries, entry dated March 17, 1938.)

From his political behavior now and throughout 1938, it can be concluded that Chamberlain's tactic in November was to establish contacts with German opponents of the regime via Halifax and to gain time for British rearmament through a policy of concealment. Once the British armament program was sufficiently advanced, Germany was to be brought to its knees. In the meantime, the Reich had to be kept guessing about Britain's real intentions. Chamberlain allowed only his closest friends to share his secret thoughts. In a private letter from that period, he confessed: "In the absence of powerful allies and until our armament is complete, we must adapt our policy to these circumstances." (Chamberlain to Mrs. Morton

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Prince, January 16, 1938. Chamberlain Papers, currently according to Colvin: Van- sittart ....., p. 156.) Winston Churchill also lamented this state of weakness in Great Britain, which was not yet "in a position to go to war." (Diaries of Harold Nicholson, 1930-1939, Vol. I.

Note of Nov. 15, 1937.) These Chamberlain directives to Halifax and Henderson ran like a red thread through British politics until the forced outbreak of war, and Sir Robert Vansittart once again set out

this policy in writing in 1938: "The policy of keeping Germany guessing is the policy of 1914. We had indeed kept the Germans guessing, and they finally guessed wrong—and war followed." (Vansittart on September 7, 1938, quoted in Colvin: Vansittart...., p. 157.) Chamberlain was obsessed with the idea of limiting the risk that his policy undoubtedly entailed: Before the lights in Europe threatened to go out once again, the German conspirators would come forward and put their plans for revolution into action. This "trump card" gave him a confidence that his supporters admired and his opponents found infuriating. Waiting for the coup was Chamberlain's political art. This guiding principle determined the policy of the British prime minister until the moment when he was forced to admit that his trump card had failed.

Halifax visit: reconnaissance and cover-up maneuvers

Before his exploratory visit to Germany, Halifax asked Ambassador Ribbentrop for a discussion and emphasized that "England and Germany must not oppose each other. A conflict between the two countries, regardless of the outcome, would mean the end of civilization." Ribbentrop replied that he himself had held this view for years and that "there was certainly no German who wanted such a conflict." (Ribbentrop to Hitler and Neurath. London, November 15, 1937, No. 686 and ADAP Series D, Vol. I, Doc. No. 24.) Halifax's obliging manner could not hide the fact that London had so far responded to his efforts to promote German-English reconciliation with delaying tactics.

Even before the Lord Privy Seal's visit to Germany, Ribbentrop, in accordance with Hitler's foreign policy concept, had

drew the first conclusions from his observations. Berlin now responded to British intransigence toward all efforts by Hitler and Ribbentrop to resolve existing differences with England and to London's attempts to encircle Germany with a policy of security, which found clear expression in the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo triangle. London had found an extremely critical observer and opponent in Ribbentrop. Even before his departure for Rome, where he signed Italy's accession to the Anti-Comintern Pact in November 1937, the British embassy counselor in Berlin, Sir Ogilvie Forbes, expressed these fears to journalists from the Daily Telegraph. He complained about Ribbentrop, who was pushing through "such things" as the Anti-Comintern Pact. Ribbentrop would be "surprised upon his return." In British government circles, "his behavior can only be explained by the fact that he has already finished his work in London." (Confidential report, Berlin, November 6, 1937. Ribbentrop's office.) London was not only concerned about the possible consequences of this German-Italian-Japanese coalition, which in times of crisis could simultaneously exert pressure on the nerve centers of British interests—Continental Europe, the Mediterranean, and Asia—but also about the anti-communist tendency expressed in the November 1937 treaty. "We absolutely do not like Ribbentrop's anti-communist complex," admitted Sir Nevile Henderson, attributing anti-British intentions to Ribbentrop and the Anti-Comintern Pact. Göring replied that the fact that the German ambassador in London had signed the treaty should "convince His Majesty's Government that this treaty does not contain any anti-British tendencies." This remark impressed Henderson, but he found it even more astonishing that Göring had brought up Ribbentrop of his own accord. Only two days earlier, Neurath had also steered the conversation toward this topic. In his conversation with the British ambassador, the German foreign minister "made no secret of his dislike of Ribbentrop." According to Henderson, Neurath is said to have been carried away into remarking that he would not be surprised if the English government "one day declared Ribbentrop persona non grata." In his conversation with Lord Halifax, who arrived in Berlin on November 17 and was invited by Neurath to a dinner en famille, the German foreign minister

allegedly struck a similar note. (Henderson to Eden, Berlin, November 18, 1937. FO 371/20751, C 8017.)

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The conspiratorial circles in Wilhelmstraße, which soon gathered around Kordt and Weizsäcker, aimed to eliminate Ribbentrop as an expert observer of England and a voice of caution at Hitler's side. The concerted action against Ribbentrop was orchestrated by those circles who needed the outbreak of war to realize their plans for a coup. The reaction in London to this sabotage policy was positive. Ribbentrop had correctly recognized the English intentions. It was a waste of time to keep the Reich government in the dark and guessing, as had been done in 1914, because the German ambassador in London was too keen an observer of British politics, and his main goal was to prevent the impending war.

Ribbentrop was not summoned to Germany for Halifax's visit. Hitler held talks with the British Lord Privy Seal only in the presence of Neurath. Since Sir Neville Henderson did not take part in the talks either, Hitler obviously did not want to give this exchange of ideas an official character, which is why it took place in Berchtesgaden and not in the Reich capital.

When Halifax finally arrived at Obersalzberg on the morning of November 19, he began his conversation with the words: "He and other members of the British government were convinced that the Führer had not only achieved great things in Germany itself, but that by destroying communism in his own country, he had also blocked its path to Western Europe. Germany could therefore rightly be regarded as the bulwark of the West against Bolshevism." (ADAP, Series D, Vol. I, Doc. No. 31.)

Halifax also continued to act in accordance with the secret instructions he had received from Eden, according to which Germany must be kept guessing about England's real intentions, when he told Hitler that "the status quo in Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Danzig could be changed." (ADAP, Series D, Vol. I, Doc. No. 31.) The British statesmen followed the same tactic toward Italy when, a few days later, Eden told the Italian ambassador in London, Count Grandi, that "certain changes might take place in Central Europe" and that his government recognized the "Berlin-Rome axis as a fact." (ADAP, Series D, Vol. I, Doc. No. 59.) This assurance, which Eden also gave to Ribbentrop, contradicted actual British foreign policy, which was trying to break up the Berlin-Rome axis. In the summer of 1937, Chamberlain still hoped to be able to exert leverage in Berlin. (See Cabinet Conclusions

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(FO 371/20735, C 4966.) From January 1938, the Prime Minister shifted to a new tactical line. From that point on, British policy focused on "bending the axis at the Rome end." (See, among others, Oliver Harvey's Diaries, Tgb. entries of Jan. 18, Feb. 16 and 18, 1938, Dec. 25, 1938, Jan. 14, 1939, and May 27, 1939.)

As in June, Ribbentrop had to remind the Foreign Office in November 1937 to keep him informed. Three days after the Hitler-Halifax talks, he was still waiting for information. Only upon request did he receive a brief summary of the individual points discussed by the Reich Chancellor and the British Lord Privy Seal at Obersalzberg. (ADAP, Series D, Doc. Nos. 32 and 33.)

The Halifax visit, which was solely the initiative of the British, had set European politics in motion. Alarmed by the rumors circulating about the Halifax-Hitler meeting, French Prime Minister Camille Chautemps and his Foreign Minister Ivon Delbos traveled to London for talks. Ribbentrop learned from a French source that the colonial question had dominated the London talks. British "left-wing politicians" had intervened to influence the French prime minister in an anti-German direction. Ribbentrop left open in his report the question of how successful these "disruption maneuvers" had been. But one fact could not be denied: the Anglo-French ministerial talks had shown that "great difficulties stand in the way of a solution to the problems." Berlin should prepare itself for a period of "protracted diplomatic talks." (Ribbentrop to Hitler and Neu- rath, London, Nov. 30, 1937, A 5125; London, Dec. 1, 1937. Top secret! Citissime! No. 736, in: Series D, Doc. No. 47 and 48; Reports from our confidants in England. E. No. 142. Confidential! London, Dec. 4, 1937; Addendum to England Report No. 142; Ribbentrop. Transcript to Pol. 1 3159/37. Record, London, Nov. 30, 1937.)

Two days after the visit of the French statesmen to London, Eden informed Ambassador Ribbentrop about the talks with Chautemps and Delbos. He emphasized the significance of the Anglo-French communiqué, in which the colonial question was mentioned as an "acute problem to be solved." Despite this statement, there had been no change in the fundamental position. London was not prepared to discuss the colonial question in isolation.

When Ribbentrop asked the British foreign minister for a clearer outline of the problem, Eden avoided giving a detailed answer. He merely spoke of "a greater sense of security." Ribbentrop regretted the "confusion" of the colonial problem "with other questions that may be difficult to resolve." (Ribbentrop to Hitler and Neurath, London, December 2, 1937. Cito! Top secret! No. 740; Eden to Henderson. London, December 1, 1937. No. 1445. FO 371/20737, C 8280.)

In Berlin, Sir Nevile Henderson attempted to gauge the reaction of Foreign Minister von Neurath to Halifax's visit. When asked by the ambassador what Hitler expected as a result, Neurath replied: "Not much," but immediately corrected himself and explained that the difficulties that were piling up would not allow for a quick outcome to the negotiations. As long as the Spanish question continued to cause atmospheric disturbances, Neurath did not expect any decisive improvement in relations between the Berlin-Rome and Paris-London axes.

London was completely satisfied with the success of the Halifax visit. Henderson's overall impression confirmed what Chamberlain had hoped for from his Lord Secretary's exploratory visit. The Halifax visit "had given a clear boost not only to the moderate groups – i.e. the conspirators – but had also had an encouraging effect on the broad masses of the German population, who had no desire to go to war and were friendly towards England in their hearts". But this observation should not obscure the fact that "a large part of the German people" would continue to take a "defensive stance" toward Great Britain in the future. Strong opposition was to be expected from a third group, which, although small in number, exerted a strong influence on Hitler. These forces would prefer a strengthening of the Berlin-Rome axis or, as an alternative, a "union with Russia... ."

The "Russian specter" was repeatedly held before Henderson's eyes, and he doubted whether it was anything more than a means of exerting pressure. He did not consider a German-Soviet settlement completely out of the question. Although there was still resistance, this too could one day be overcome. Henderson had recently had a long conversation with Göring and Field Marshal von Blomberg. Both made it emphatically clear that "Stalin would not survive much longer, and Russia would very likely

return to extreme nationalism."

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so that Germany would then only need to extend its little finger, which Russia would grasp with enthusiasm." Hitler, however, was opposed to cooperation with Moscow. Mentally, however, people seemed to be preparing for the coming major turning point. There was not the slightest doubt about Göring's and Blomberg's loyalty to Hitler. Both emphasized that Hitler alone determined the course of foreign policy. "The entire German population stands united" behind the Reich Chancellor. Göring added, "If anything should happen to Hitler, his ideas will survive, possibly ... in an even more fanatical form." Both spoke repeatedly of Hitler's "deep and bitter disappointment with the English attitude." Blomberg even compared Hitler's feelings to those of "a woman whose advances have been rejected." (Henderson to Eden, Berlin, December 1, 1937, No. 1068; FO 371/20737, C 8315.)

But Henderson was optimistic. He hoped that the visit would usher in a new era in German-English relations. (Henderson to Eden, Berlin, December 1 and 7, 1937; FO 371/20737, C 8634.) It is interesting to hear Henderson say that Halifax's visit gave a significant boost to the "moderate groups" – the conspirators. This proves that Halifax had made contact with the circle of conspirators during his three-day stay in Berlin. The "Russian specter" conjured up by Henderson also points in this direction, for it is well known that memories of the cooperation between the Reichswehr and the Russian army in the 1920s had not yet completely faded.

Henderson's often frank discussions of German-English relations triggered partly fierce accusations and partly critical comments in the Foreign Office. OÖ. E. Sargent, who, together with Vansittart, had distinguished himself as an advocate of anti-German forces, considered the time ripe to give Henderson unambiguous instructions on the line of discussion to be taken. He feared that the ambassador's remarks could give rise to "false impressions." Eden was also concerned that Henderson had gone too far. In two detailed dispatches, the British ambassador received clearly defined instructions that sharply limited his range of topics. Eden sharply rejected Henderson's optimistic remark that the Halifax visit marked a turning point in Anglo-German relations. The Hitler-Halifax talks had given no cause

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to reconsider the course of British foreign policy. The route that London had taken should be pursued unwaveringly. London expected Berlin to take up the British proposals on disarmament, the League of Nations, the Western Pact, and general solutions to the issues of Central and Eastern Europe. But even if Germany agreed to these British proposals, the British government would not be obliged, "even in principle," to surrender any former German colonies. A bilateral agreement between the Reich and Great Britain was ruled out from the outset. London had a "general European solution" in mind, not "merely a separate agreement" between the two states. Chamberlain was not prepared to deviate even slightly from the foreign policy line he had once embarked upon. (Sargent's comment of December 13, 1937; Henderson to the Foreign Office, Berlin, December 9, 1937, No. 507; Eden to Henderson, London, December 17, 1937, No. 1510. FO 371/20737, C 8466.)

Henderson had no idea that these sharp rebukes were coming his way when he once again took a fundamental position on the problems hanging between Berlin and London on December 15. His detailed report on German-British relations crossed paths with Eden's instructions, which were to serve as guidelines for his future discussions with German statesmen. He reiterated that the Halifax visit had triggered positive reactions in Germany. Hitler, Henderson affirmed, who "would certainly prefer

friendship with England to friendship with any other country... ... now at least looked to the future with hopeful curiosity to see whether the Halifax visit would actually lead to anything more than the unsuccessful pre-war visit of Lord Haldane or the visit of Sir John Simon and you—Eden—in 1935." Henderson believed he detected a certain German willingness "to make greater sacrifices on the altar of peace...." The Reich government, the English ambassador predicted, was remaining in a waiting position. The initiative must come from London or jointly from Paris and the English government. Even before Henderson's report reached the Foreign Office, Eden had already anticipated the response when he informed the ambassador: "It is not intended to approach the German government with English and French proposals in the near future." He instructed Henderson to therefore

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He should avoid concrete discussions. He should even avoid making assumptions. (Eden to Henderson, December 17, 1937.)

In his report, Berlin, December 15, 1937, No. 1120, FO 371/20737, to Eden, Henderson had urged that too much time should not be allowed to pass and commented on the issues he considered most pressing. Berlin should be offered a solution to the colonial question, quasi as a quid pro quo for the naval treaty. The reconciliation complex should be placed at the center of attention. The Austrian question should be left out because he saw no reason why this question could not be resolved peacefully. The complex issue of Czechoslovakia raised much more serious problems. Henderson believed that "true pacification" could only be achieved if the Sudeten Germans were granted "equal rights" that would transform them into "truly loyal citizens of Czechoslovakia." As a way out, Henderson advocated a bilateral agreement between the Reich and Czechoslovakia. Henderson's ideas stood in sharp contrast to those of the Foreign Office. London dreamed of a collective agreement, while Berlin wanted to ease tensions in Europe through bilateral neighborly treaties. In his talks with Halifax, Hitler had described the League of Nations as an instrument for implementing the Versailles dictates and not as a platform on which the "peace order" of 1919 would be renegotiated. Hitler had never considered the demand for the return of colonies to be a priority and later broke off negotiations on this issue of his own accord. When he realized that he could not achieve a satisfactory result with England on this issue, he instructed the German press to treat the colonial complex very quietly. Finally, he went even further.

On March 3, 1938, Hitler drew a line under this difference and, in the presence of Ribbentrop, told the British ambassador Henderson:

"He—Adolf Hitler—did not consider the colonial question ready for a solution, as Paris and London had committed themselves too strongly and too firmly against the return of the territories. Therefore, he did not want to press the issue. One could wait four, six, eight, or ten years. Perhaps by then there would be a change of heart in Paris and London and they would then see that the best solution would be to return to Germany what was its rightful property, acquired by purchase and treaty... Germany did not want to burden other, uninvolved states with the colonial solution. Perhaps Belgium and Portugal would not agree at all and much...

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They would easily believe that Germany was demanding something from them that it was not entitled to." (Files I, Doc. 138.)

Hitler's remark that Germany did not want to burden other, uninvolved states with the colonial question refers to false reports in the foreign press that Germany had demanded parts of the Belgian Congo and Portuguese Angola as compensation for renouncing Tanganyika (German East Africa) and German South West Africa. This pure fabrication was a diversionary tactic, because Hitler had not made any demands whatsoever in his conversation with Halifax. On the contrary, he had explained his views on the colonial question to Halifax in the following words:

"It is a fact that some peoples do not have enough living space. If England, with its 46 million people, had to live only from the mother country, it would probably understand this more easily. All the prejudice in the colonial question stems from the fact that it is taken for granted that America and Russia have large territories at their disposal, that England owns a quarter of the world, that France has a colonial empire, and that Japan, at least, cannot be prevented from expanding. It is also taken for granted that smaller countries such as Belgium, Spain, and Portugal have colonies. Only Germany was told that under no circumstances was it allowed to have colonies... What sense would it make to invite a country to cooperate actively if it was denied the most basic rights in other matters... He was aware of the position of the parties in England on the colonial question, especially the negative attitude of the Conservatives. The same was true in France. Germany could only take note of this attitude and be aware of the fact that under these circumstances the colonial problem could not be solved. It would simply have to wait and see! (Files I, Doc. 31.)

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Ribbentrop: England will fight!

Ribbentrop: England will fight!

Historical parallels: the Haldane Mission in 1912 and Halifax's visit in 1937

Even before the Hitler-Halifax talks, Ribbentrop contacted the Historical Department of the Foreign Office on November 18, 1937, and requested the prompt submission of "a historically flawless expert opinion ... on the political objectives of the so-called Haldane Mission in 1912 and on the significance of the outcome of this mission for the development of German-English relations before the war." (T 120, 1316, D 496830, No. 695.) Halifax's visit brought back historical memories. The Haldane Mission came to mind as a parallel. The year 1912 had set the course at that time. Haldane had been British Minister of War from 1905 to 1912.

On December 3, 1937, Ribbentrop received the objective historical study he had requested on the "Haldane Mission," i.e., on the negotiations Haldane had conducted unsuccessfully in Berlin in 1912 on a German-English understanding on the fleet question: In early 1909, Kaiser Wilhelm II had his confidant Albert Ballin, the general director of the Hamburg-America Line, contact Cassel, who had emigrated from Germany, in London and inquire whether Great Britain was prepared to conclude a naval agreement with the Reich (Krogmann diary). The German government had previously gained the impression that the British cabinet was inclined to resolve the German-English differences. In August 1909, London and Berlin entered into official negotiations. The German government was primarily interested in concluding a "general political agreement," while the British mainly wanted to reach an understanding on naval armament. When Haldane arrived in Berlin in February 1912, the Kaiser outlined the main features of a "political agreement." A satisfactory clarification of this issue would enable him to modify the new fleet bill and postpone its implementation. Since Haldane raised no objections, the fleet issue receded into the background. The negotiating partners concentrated on the

modalities of a comprehensive political agreement. In a long discussion with Reich Chancellor Beth-

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mann-Hollweg presented Haldane with a "draft of a conceivable formula": "1. Rejection of any direct or indirect aggressive attitude towards each other, 2. Benevolent neutrality and efforts to localize any conflict between one partner and other powers, 3. The new agreement shall not violate existing agreements between the two parties with other powers." The Imperial Government had to assume that Haldane, "even if without authority to enter into binding agreements," was acting in concert with the British Cabinet. Haldane, however, was immediately called to order by his government. He was accused of having gone too far. His mission was merely for "informational purposes." A political "understanding" without the conclusion of a naval agreement could have no "binding effect." Contrary to the British tactic originally chosen, which was to treat the naval talks as secondary, an understanding on naval armament was now placed at the center of the negotiations. In a memorandum dated February 24, 1912, the British cabinet demanded that Germany completely abandon its naval rearmament. This deception caused particular outrage among the Kaiser. A chancellor crisis seemed to be brewing. Bethmann-Hollweg made another attempt in the hope of restarting the negotiations and achieving a reasonably acceptable outcome. His proposal amounted to London accepting only "conditionally" the formula he had worked out with Haldane. The British government rejected this and submitted its own counterproposal, which, however, was "as non-binding as possible." However, the German Reich Chancellor insisted on a British "declaration of neutrality," which London ultimately refused to give. This negative decision had been made independently by London. Paris and St. Petersburg had not exerted any significant pressure. After hopes for the conclusion of a neutrality agreement had been dashed, the Reich government informed London that it was also unable to take British wishes regarding the new German fleet bill into account. The German-English negotiations ended in a deadlock. (The Haldane Miss. Prs. Hist. 425. Section "Hist. Ref." to Ribbentrop. Dec. 3, 1937. Z 120, 1316.) After reading this historical account, Ribbentrop's suspicion grew that the Halifax mission had not only served "informational purposes," as Haldane's trip had once done, but had been staged as a "reconnaissance and cover-up maneuver."

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Henderson undoubtedly learned through his good connections to the Foreign Office that Ribbentrop had had the documents on the Haldane mission of 1912 sent to London from the Historical Department on Wilhelmstraße. Dark forebodings assailed the British ambassador. He too immersed himself in historical studies and, in February 1938, obtained F. Maurice's biography of Haldane, which aroused his melancholic interest, as he wrote in a private letter to Halifax on February 15, 1938:

"Although Haldane's mission was fundamentally different from yours, if only because he was authorized to conduct negotiations on specific issues, a comparison can nevertheless be drawn; perhaps we can also learn from this lesson!" (FO 800/269, February 15, 1938).

Then as now, Henderson affirmed, "we cannot give a guarantee of neutrality in every case." And this fact, he continued, must be made clear to the Germans. However, Henderson did not view the situation as entirely hopeless. He believed that Hitler would understand the British position that it was not possible to make a general declaration of neutrality. Unlike Admiral Tirpitz, who had pushed for a "third fleet squadron" in 1912, Hitler had imposed self-restraint on himself through the naval

agreement of June 1935. Germany's willingness to accommodate England and meet it more than halfway testified to the chancellor's peaceful intentions toward the island nation, whose interests he respected and whose supremacy at sea he accepted. Henderson therefore saw "no reason to assume" that Hitler would allow a German-British agreement to fail because of an uncompromising demand for complete British neutrality. The only assurance Hitler wanted from London was an English declaration of neutrality in the event of a German-Soviet conflict. That was Henderson's conviction.

The time had come, Henderson warned, to honor the generous German naval agreement of June 1935 with a reciprocal gesture. He therefore proposed preparing British public opinion psychologically for the return of the former German colonies. But the naval agreement was to be presented not only to the British public as a motive for German "generosity" in returning the colonies, but also to Hitler himself. In June 1935, Hitler had taken the first step toward German-British reconciliation.

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done, and "we must give him that credit." Henderson believed that the main reason for Hitler's "disappointment with us" was the fact that "we showed so little gratitude for his gesture." For the agreement of June 1935 was "a gesture," and Hitler had decided to take this step against the objections "of men like Neurath." Only swift action, free of "petty-mindedness," could help out of the crisis situation into which one had maneuvered oneself, because the forbearance of the German government would not last forever. London should freely admit that the English decision to return the colonies to the Reich was conditional on Hitler's voluntary renunciation of fleet parity. "And we must resolve to carry out the big solution—the big thing—if we want to achieve anything at all," the English ambassador urged his government. "Personally, I would rather do nothing than act like a petty merchant, and besides, I would rather do nothing than achieve a super Pyrrhic victory—that most Pyrrhic of all combats—namely, a diplomatic victory." Henderson had "given free rein to his thoughts." He apologized to Lord Halifax for this. But the outcome of the Haldane mission had "affected" him deeply. He was horrified by the thought that "the events of 1912 could be repeated, simply because one side or the other failed to show the last ounce of goodwill." Henderson held the Reich government largely responsible for the failed negotiations of 1912. But without saying so directly, the English ambassador warned his government not to take sole blame this time. (Henderson to Halifax. Berlin, February 15, 1938. FO 800/269.)

Ribbentrop and Henderson were both fighting a losing battle. But the British ambassador's position was more difficult, because in his efforts to maintain peace he had to fight against his own government. Ribbentrop, on the other hand, had been working for years on behalf of Hitler to achieve a German-British settlement and enjoyed the full support of the German chancellor. Henderson had also dedicated himself to paving the way for German-English reconciliation. But he ultimately failed due to the obstacles erected by his own government. Both ambassadors, Ribbentrop and Henderson, were subject to the veto of London and its policy of "balance of power." But a second obstacle had also arisen.

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In this case, Ribbentrop was in a worse position than Henderson. He knew nothing of the activities of the German conspirators who were advising London against Germany and urging the British government to remain firm in the face of Hitler's wishes, even the most reasonable ones. Henderson was in close contact with these circles, which he had to classify as "moderates" for propaganda reasons.

Unlike Ribbentrop, Henderson knew everything. He was familiar with official German policy and also with the secret machinations of the conspirators.

Ribbentrop's "Main Report London A 5522" and "Conclusions" of December 28, 1937, and January 2, 1938

As a result of his mission to London, Ribbentrop realized that he had reached a crossroads. When he asked Hitler in the summer of 1936 to entrust him with the mission to England, he had no illusions about the obstacles and hurdles that blocked the way to London. The limits of what was possible were already looming on the political horizon. But the attempt had to be made. The personal risk was out of proportion to the goal: the desire to reconcile the two nations. But the commitment was not unlimited. German self-interest could not be put at risk. His guiding principle was a willingness to compromise while preserving his own country's national interests. But by December 1937, Ribbentrop could no longer close his eyes to the fact that British policy of "balance of power" and German self-determination were on a collision course. All these impressions, observations, and explanations from his time in London had made a deep impression on Ribbentrop when he compiled the extensive material for his "main report" of December 28, 1937. Ribbentrop had postponed his vacation trip to Germany. On December 20, he informed Hitler by telephone via Schaub of the postponement of his departure. He said he was still awaiting "further information" for the report "he wanted to give the Führer on the situation and the further handling of Chamberlain's policy." He would not arrive in the capital until December 22 or 23. Immediately

After his return, he wanted to report to Hitler. (Note for Brigadeführer Schaub. London, December 20, 1937. "Ribbentrop Office" T 120, 31, 28869.)

This Ribbentrop report "London, A 5522" dated December 28, 1937, was not available at the Nuremberg Trials in 1946. It was kept hidden in London for the next 22 years. In the official German publication of the files (ADAP, Series D, Vol. D), in the note on "Document 93"—Ribbentrop's conclusions of January 2, 1938—the "main report" (A 5522) is once described as "not printed" and another time as "not found." The "path" of the document, which disappeared after 1945 and suddenly reappeared at the end of the 1960s, cannot be fully clarified even today. But of all the speculations and assumptions, the most convincing at present is that of Dr. H. G. Sasse, head of the Political Archives at the Foreign Office in Bonn: According to the editors of the "Akten zur Deutschen Auswärtigen Politik, 1918-1945" (Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945), the Ribbentrop report "London, A 5522" was not among the so-called spoils of war that the victorious powers confiscated after the collapse and transported to London and Washington. After the German files stored in the Foreign Office had been returned to Bonn to the Political Archive between 1956 and 1958 under the repatriation agreement between the Federal Republic and the Western powers, it soon became apparent that, according to the evacuation list drawn up in Berlin in 1943, the first volume of the series German-English Relations in the files of the State Secretary von Weizsäcker's office was missing, although, as Dr. Sasse noted, the volume "could not have been lost as a result of the war." English government agencies informed the Political Archive in Bonn that this volume had not arrived at the London file collection center. The explanation given was that the volume had been "requested by British headquarters—Montgomery—immediately after our official files were found and had disappeared there." (The head of the Political Archives, Bonn, Foreign Office, Dr. H. G. Sasse to A. v. Ribbentrop, July 4, 1969.)

This misrepresentation would have had to be accepted had it not been for the chance discovery of the Ribbentrop report "A 5522" by Laurence Thompson, an Englishman with good connections to former senior officials of the Foreign Office, who was searching for historical "jewels." In his little-noticed book on the Czech crisis of 1938, "The Greatest Treason -

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The Untold Story of Munich (New York, 1968) – the author quotes extensively from Ribbentrop's earlier and more interesting report A 5522. This was the main report and its accompanying "Conclusions." The Nuremberg Tribunal used only one of the ten pages of the latter. (For a critical analysis of the "Conclusions," see A. von Ribbentrop: Deutsch-Englische Geheimverbindungen, Britische Dokumente der Jahre 1938 und 1939 im Lichte der Kriegsschuldfrage, Tübingen 1967, pp. 92-105.)

Even Colvin, who was otherwise critical and hostile and flew back and forth between the German conspirators and the British government in 1938/39, endeavors to make an objective statement when he reproduces the essential points of the "Conclusions." Without having read the even more important "main report," he comes to the positive conclusion that the "conclusions" stand out among the reports written by German career diplomats at the time as the work of a "policy-maker"—a person who develops a political-strategic concept. (Colvin/Vansittart, p. 117.) He believes that this final and groundbreaking report prompted Hitler to place the Foreign Office under Ribbentrop's control.

It was only through indirect means that a copy of Ribbentrop's report "A 5522" was obtained. Research in German and American archives, where German foreign files are stored either in the original or on microfilm, proved fruitless. The British Foreign Office Library in London was also unwilling to respond to direct inquiries. In the meantime, the well-known English writer David Irving has located Ribbentrop's report to the Führer of December 28, 1937, in the Foreign Office, where the original carbon copy had been filed in the wrong collection. The report is indeed highly interesting. Based on his study of Ribbentrop's report "A 5522," David Irving comes to "a completely different assessment of Ribbentrop than in the books published to date" in his forthcoming biography of Hitler. Irving sent a copy to interested parties, including the Foreign Office in Bonn. (David Irving to A. v. Ribbentrop. London, October 26, 1972.)

As early as 1961, David L. Hoggan assessed Ribbentrop's "conclusions" of January 2, 1938 differently than numerous contemporary historians: "No other German diplomat at that time had given Hitler a comparable analysis of British policy."

and England's attitude toward Germany. The Ribbentrop Report is comparable to Alfred V. Kiderlen-Waechters' memorandum of 1909 on German-English and German-Russian relations. This memorandum had been requested by Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg and brought Kiderlen to the Wilhelmstraße. Like Colvin, Hoggan also believes that Ribbentrop's "conclusions" were decisive for

his appointment as German Foreign Minister in February 1938. (Hoggan: Der erzwungene Krieg [The Forced War], Tübingen 1961, p. 95.)

This book is the first to publish the full text of the key historical document "A 5522," based on the original carbon copy found in the Foreign Office and confirmed by Irving.

Main report "London A 5522" dated December 28, 1937

* Copy for the Minister. Berlin, December 28, 1937.

A 5522

Contents: German-English relations and the further handling of Chamberlain's initiative.

* A double copy of the letter was sent to the US ambassador in Berlin, with a copy to the US ambassador in Washington.

* One copy to the Führer and Reich Chancellor (or sent directly to the Reich Foreign Minister)
* One copy to the President of the United States and the British Prime Minister.
* For the Führer and Reich Chancellor personally

* For the Führer and Reich Chancellor personally * (For the Reich Minister of Foreign Affairs personally)

I. For centuries, England has always fought for three principles:

1. English supremacy at sea;

2. for the inviolability of the so-called "low countries" (Holland and Belgium) and

3. for the balance in Europe.

Regarding 1. Supremacy at sea no longer exists in the world. The question of naval rivalry between Germany and England is no longer as relevant as it was before the war, since the naval treaty.

* These lines were added later.

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However, the following must be taken into account: The British Admiralty estimates that, in an emergency, the ratio of 100:35 specified in the fleet agreement would be reduced to a maximum of 60% in the North Sea, as 40% of the English fleet would normally have to remain in other waters. If the British Admiralty had to reckon with hostility from Italy and possibly Japan, the figures would shift even more to England's disadvantage, despite the addition of the allied French fleet. Even with the active intervention of a friendly American fleet, England would not, in my opinion, be able to count on such support in the North Sea and East Asia.

Regarding 2. As a result of the emergence of the air force, France has now joined the so-called "low countries." Strategically, therefore, England, in agreement with Baldwin's thesis on England's border on

the Rhine, now regards the three countries of Holland, Belgium, and France as a kind of glacis for English defense. In my opinion, it is an established fact that English foreign policy is inextricably linked to that of France, which in recent years has become increasingly dependent on the Foreign Office out of concern about the resurgent Germany. For this reason, England has always done everything in its power to prevent a rapprochement between Germany and France on the one hand, and on the other hand to prevent France from being weakened, for example by Bolshevism. According to my information, the English agent Sir Charles Mendl (long-time press attaché and confidant of the English Embassy in Paris) has, according to my information, distributed many millions in France over the last two years, especially to combat communism. There are now a great many French politicians who have received bribes from him, and this has always given England a strong hand in both French domestic and foreign policy.

'Zu3. Since the National Socialists seized power and since Germany's rearmament, England has seen the possibility of a disruption of the existing balance in Europe, which could deprive it of its role as arbiter of Europe and thus its freedom of action, and could even pose a direct threat to England. The unforgettable achievements of the German army in the war against the Allies play a special role in these English concerns. Germany is therefore regarded, as the embassy's reports have repeatedly expressed throughout the year, as the most dangerous possible enemy. For other possible enemies, such as Japan, do indeed pose a threat, but

* Subsequently changed to "in my opinion, can hardly be expected" in the original.

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England has significant interests, but these are initially only on the periphery of its empire. Italy threatens the fastest, but not the only, route to its most important possession, India, but the heart of the British Empire, namely the British Isles, can only be threatened by Germany. i

II. Since the formation of the Rome-Berlin axis and Mussolini's visit to Germany, since the concerns about the outcome of the Spanish Civil War and its obvious effects on the English position in the Mediterranean, since Italy's joining the anti-Comintern movement, and since Japan's advance in China, England's fears of a disruption of the balance of power in Europe and in the world in general have intensified. England now sees its East Asian possessions threatened by Japan, its sea route through the Mediterranean to India threatened by Italy, and its mother country, the British Isles, threatened by Germany alone. in Europe and the world in general have intensified. England now sees its East Asian possessions threatened by Japan, its sea route through the Mediterranean to India threatened by Italy, and its mother country, the British Isles, threatened by Germany.

III. England has responded to this development first by its violent rearmament program and second by strengthening its alliance with France. Since the beginning of the year, England has also been trying to secure America as a source of raw materials (cf. Runciman's trip to America). Preliminary talks on a trade agreement, which also began about a year ago, have been continuing quietly but eagerly since the beginning of this year and will soon lead to regular negotiations. However, England's ultimate goal is undoubtedly to win America back as an ally in the event of a European conflict.

IV. The main question for England, which naturally sees the preservation of peace as the best guarantee for the preservation of the empire, remains whether it will be possible to reach an arrangement with

Germany that will secure world peace and maintain the European balance. It is conceivable that there are men in the English government (although, based on my experience and observations, I doubt that Chamberlain and Halifax are among them) who still believe in the possibility of a friendly arrangement with Germany on the following basis:

the return of some German colonies and leaving open a solution to the Austrian question that could pave the way for a peaceful annexation, as well as an improvement in the situation of the Sudeten Germans, possibly up to cultural autonomy, in return for which, among other things,

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Renewal of Germany's commitment not to attack its neighbors and commitment to resolve all problems with them solely through peaceful negotiation, but otherwise clear agreement on at least a qualitative limitation of air armaments along the lines of the German-British naval agreement, e.g., through bans on bombing, restrictions on bomber aircraft, and possibly in quantitative terms through disclosure and possibly restriction of the budget. _

In my opinion, this would be approximately the maximum that these men, who fundamentally believe in an agreement with Germany (i.e., those who do not see the existence of a Germany with a so-called expansive National Socialist worldview as an insurmountable obstacle to a German-English understanding), can imagine under an arrangement with Germany.

V. The majority of the English people today are in favor of an understanding with Germany. They would gladly give Germany some colonies and undoubtedly also understand the German desire for space in the East, if this means that the English people do not have to go to war. However, this primitive attitude of the British people is of little significance in the shaping of British foreign policy. If the much-vaunted public opinion in England has forced the British government to make certain decisions in recent years, this is, in my opinion, due more to a lack of preparation of public opinion by the leaders. I am convinced that the leadership in England is capable of using propaganda to prepare domestic and foreign policy decisions in such a way that the English people would ultimately go along with them (see the attitude of public opinion, the press, etc., when the very popular King Edward VIII abdicated). A decision that would mean war for the English people would, of course, have to be prepared with particular care in terms of propaganda. In my opinion, the people would not easily be won over to a war if English interests were not directly threatened. But even in such cases, I believe that the government could ultimately impose its will through appropriate reports of atrocities, etc. It will not be impossible for the English government to present a warlike development to both the English people and the dominions as if British interests were threatened. Of course, such propaganda needs a certain amount of time before it becomes effective. A special role

* "innen- und" was added by hand at a later date.

* "domestic and" was added by hand at a later date.

The specter of a possible air raid on the British Isles is now also playing a role.

VI. The characteristic feature of the English ruling class today is still material egoism, "power consciousness," and, most importantly, the will to rule and, fundamentally, the heroic

heroic view of life, which we also have, the same view of life that ultimately created the British Empire and preserved it for centuries. Slogans such as "nation of shopkeepers" were, in my opinion, never fundamentally accurate in describing the character of the English ruling class. The English ruling class today, just as in the past, will fight for its significant material interests and its position of power in the world as long as there is a chance of winning, ultimately to the bitter end, i.e., to the point of war. England will never recklessly risk such a venture. It will always carefully weigh the balance of power and, if necessary, delay decisions. Once the odds are in England's favor, it will fight. In my opinion, England's non-intervention in the Abyssinian War is not due to a lack of heroism, but rather to the fact that England had criminally neglected its armaments and to the misjudgment of the situation by the English government, which believed that Italy would get bogged down there and abandon the adventure of its own accord.

VI. Since Germany's resurgence, two groups have emerged in the assessment of the German problem:

a) The unconditional opponents of Germany: these ultra-conservative circles, which also include some members of the moderate conservative and liberal camps of all shades*, consider cooperation with Germany impossible because they see the new shaping of German national power according to the principles of National Socialism as a threat to Great Britain, and because they believe that Germany, as the continent's strongest nation in terms of race, is the only nation that can truly threaten the British Empire. These enemies of Germany also include the trade union leadership of the Labour Party, which rejects the National Socialist worldview and fears the possible repercussions of this worldview for its own positions of power within England, as well as the influence of the Jews, who are hostile to us, which extends to all strata of society—and in some cases

* "heroically" added later.

* "heroically" added later. * Short text in brackets crossed out here.

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also of English Freemasonry and the churches. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, there is the traditional hostility of Foreign Office circles toward Germany, which has remained unchanged since Sir Eyre Crowe's memorandum of 1907, according to which England must never make a pact with Germany. These circles believe that the only way to counter the alleged power politics of the new Germany is with the principle of power, and are therefore systematically working to encircle Germany. They do not want to believe in any German peace assurances and therefore claim that any treaty agreement with Germany in this regard is pointless. They are also partly responsible for the intensification of the crisis mood on the London Stock Exchange in recent months, which was initially caused by the American economic situation.

In my opinion, these circles are also responsible for the gradual sidelining of figures within the government who would be prepared to negotiate with Germany, such as Lord Monsell, Lord Londonderry, and even Edward VII, which has become more noticeable in recent years. On the other hand, outspoken enemies of Germany within the cabinet, such as Duff Cooper, have gained position

and influence. The fact that Sir Robert Vansittart and Eden remain as strong exponents of the anti-German circles, although it has been repeatedly claimed that they would be assigned to other posts, and the appointment of Hoare Belisha (Jew) as Minister of War should also be noted. I would also like to mention Vansittart's persistent and vigorous attempts to direct the affairs of the German-English Society and keep them on a small scale so that they do not become a major propaganda instrument for German-English understanding.

b) Germany's conditional friends: that is, those circles that desire friendly understanding with Germany and do not consider this impossible in principle. This group includes the moderate conservatives (the Astor group, Times, Lord Rennell, Londonderry, etc.) as well as a number of not insignificant liberals (Lothian, etc.) and, out of pacifist ideals, some representatives of left-wing circles, such as Lord Allen of Hurtwood, Lord Arnold, and Lord Noel-Buxton. Added to this are the influences of City businessmen.

The attitude of these circles, which must of course be viewed with the necessary scepticism, can best be summarised as follows:

They, too, are skeptical about German assurances of peace. Nevertheless, they consider it more appropriate to use all means and

* "also" added by hand.

* "also" added by hand.

Ways to try to avoid a military conflict and reach an agreement with Germany. However, this arrangement would have to remain within the framework mentioned above in point V. Although skeptical about future developments, these circles would agree to such an arrangement, even if only as a temporary solution, in the hope that events might occur that would curb Germany's expansionist tendencies and bring it back "into the circle of nations." A special role is played here by the idea of gaining time in view of the economic difficulties that are still considered possible and that could force Germany to adopt a more modest stance.

VII.

VII. Since taking office, British Prime Minister Chamberlain has been repeatedly reminded by the second group mentioned above of the need for an understanding with Germany. I have occasionally had the impression that Chamberlain is not entirely unaffected by his father's idea of such a German-British understanding. However, one should not attach too much importance to this, as Chamberlain is hardly susceptible to idealistic or sentimental ideas, but is considered a sober and unsentimental politician. Since taking office, he has repeatedly attempted to enter into talks with Germany, Italy, and Japan. Instead of this new tactic succeeding, however, Chamberlain had to watch as the Rome-Berlin axis grew ever stronger as a result of Mussolini's visit, the anti-Comintern triangle of Berlin-Rome-Tokyo emerged, and Japan increasingly threatened British interests in China. This development and the uncertainty and nervousness that were becoming apparent in influential circles here led Chamberlain to approve Halifax's trip to Berlin. In my opinion, the following consideration was decisive for Chamberlain's decision to go ahead with this visit, which Berlin considered inconvenient:

a) Chamberlain wanted to explore whether an understanding with Germany was possible on terms acceptable to England, that is, how far Germany's demands went and whether England could accept them. If so, this would be a great success for Chamberlain.

b) If such an agreement was not possible, Chamberlain would have used this initiative to provide the English people with an alibi for his peace efforts. This would be in line with the traditional English tendency to gather arguments for the question of guilt in a possible future war.

c) Chamberlain wanted to bring about a détente in any case in order to put an end to the rumors of crisis and war.

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and thereby calm the economy, which has been unsettled by events in the Far East, South America, etc. The idea that the British rearmament program would be easier to implement in a calm economic atmosphere certainly also played a role.

d) However, it seems to me that the following line of thought also played a special role: England has long considered it conceivable that sooner or later Germany, due to internal divisions,

'and also in Austria. They would like to avoid such a solution, especially as regards Czechoslovakia, by means of a compromise.

and also in Austria. They would like to avoid such a solution, especially with regard to Czechoslovakia.

if possible. If this is not possible, England, which could be drawn into such a conflict at any time by France's possible intervention, would like to ensure in any case that it does not begin at a time when "its armament has not reached at least a certain level. One often hears and reads here about 1939 as the year in which England will be able to take a stronger stance. In my opinion, the time is more likely to be later, especially in view of the English naval program. Before that, such a conflict would be just as inconvenient for England as last year's Italian campaign in Abyssinia. That is why the Foreign Office has been doing so much for years to urge Prague to improve its position on the Sudeten question. Halifax's statement in Berchtesgaden that the status quo in Austria and Czechoslovakia cannot be maintained in the long run could therefore be based on the British concern about a military conflict and the intention to offer us the prospect of understanding and even support for a peaceful settlement of these and other issues.

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(colonial question) by England, allegedly initiated by us.
. (Colonial question) by England.
. (Colonial question) by England.

to take violent measures at a time that did not suit England. I consider it likely that these considerations played a role in Chamberlain's initiative. The tactic of concealing true intentions is a long-standing tradition in English politics. An example of this was England's attitude before the World War, when it concealed its intentions so well that "with England's unexpected entry into the war, German foreign policy collapsed," and that there are still politicians today who believe that England did not deliberately work toward the encirclement of Germany at that time.

IX. The result of the Halifax visit:

According to the British view, the Halifax visit has brought about a certain easing of German-British relations, at least outwardly.

* Handwritten correction.

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must be found. Considering that only a year ago Lord Halifax told me that any mention of our debate on the colonies in a public communiqué would cost him his ministerial post, this is undoubtedly progress. However, we are still extremely far from practical results. Neither the government nor Parliament seems ready at present to make truly generous concessions. It is also possible that England's rigid stance on the question of Austria and the German minorities in Czechoslovakia has softened somewhat.

It is important for us to gain a clear picture of the impression that Germany's conditional friends in the cabinet have of the possibility of an understanding after the Halifax visit. I have had long discussions with Chamberlain, Halifax, Eden, Vansittart, Lord Rothermere, and other politicians over the last few days. My impression is as follows:

Even among those who are well disposed toward Germany, there continues to be strong mistrust regarding "Germany's ultimate intentions." A remark made by Lord Halifax, who had breakfast with me alone before Christmas, is worth mentioning in this context: When I expressed my regret to Halifax that all serious attempts at German-English understanding in recent years had failed due to the indecisiveness of the English government, especially Baldwin, he replied that this was because many people had such strong mistrust of German intentions. These people believed that even if major concessions were made today and a new treaty was concluded with Germany for the peaceful settlement of all European questions, something could happen tomorrow or in a year's time that would cause Germany to say that its honor was at stake—that a completely new situation had arisen—and that Germany would have to act. Lord Londonderry seems to believe this too. He said to me recently: once a powerful nation has set itself in motion and taken possession of a position or a country — e.g., Austria, etc. — that nation must, in its momentum, continue to march against Europe, against the world (“there is no end to the moving of a nation, once it has started moving”). Our counterarguments, such as that the Führer deliberately instilled this heroic view of life in the German people because it was the only way they could regain their freedom and equality, but that once Germany had achieved ideological and material equality, the German people would once again become a contented and satisfied people

would be that, as far as England is concerned, Germany can only have an interest in preserving the empire, since it would never be in question as its heir, and that by concluding the German-English naval agreement, the Führer has demonstrated precisely the far-sightedness- which speaks for itself and is characteristic of the current German way of thinking - are all useful arguments that may well have appealed to liberal minds, but cannot convince hard-nosed politicians, who have forged* and maintained a global empire with similar arguments.

b) Concerns about a violent solution to the Austrian and Czech questions, which we are allegedly planning sooner or later, also continue to exist.

c) The colonial question is generally considered ripe for discussion, but all sides, including Halifax and Eden in my recent talks with them, emphasize that this is a very difficult problem. This is probably meant to indicate that we should not have too many illusions about the scope of a colonial offer. It has been noted that Germany is prepared to depart from its fundamental position that all former German colonies must be returned and to accept compensation for colonies that cannot be returned. In the British view, this means that the colonial problem has, if not become an insoluble task, at least become a matter open to negotiation.

d) In my discussions with all parties, but especially with Halifax and also with Chamberlain, I noticed that it was emphasized that further negotiations could only be conducted very slowly and step by step, and preferably through diplomatic channels. I have not sensed any urgency or desire for particularly expeditious treatment of the matter, so that one cannot help feeling that powerful forces are at work to drag things out. All sides repeatedly emphasize the sincerity of Chamberlain's initiative, but explain that there are, of course, enormously difficult problems to deal with that require time. When I pointed out to Halifax that Germany's right to colonies was not a bargaining chip for the settlement of any political issues, he replied that this was not the intention, but asked me to recommend to Berlin that at least the various issues could be discussed simultaneously.

* Handwritten correction from "forged."

not to refuse to deal with any question. I told him that, in my opinion, this would amount to the same thing.

In summary, it can be said that this caution and slow handling of the problems express a desire to gain time and a lack of strong will to achieve something quickly.

I therefore believe that the question of whether an agreement with

Germany through friendly agreements is possible is not the right one.

Germany by way of friendly agreements after

em ı Halifax visit "is still considered open at best by circles well disposed toward Germany, in the hope that Germany will or must still come to terms with the basis outlined in Section IV.

X. Chautemps and Delbos' visit to London

This is presented here as follows: the French have been informed that Halifax merely had an informative conversation with the Führer and that Central European issues were only touched upon. Based on Halifax's report, Chautemps and Delbos then agreed to examine the German colonial problem and make any proposals for German concessions in the interests of a peaceful settlement and arms limitation. There is no doubt that the visit by Chautemps and Delbos represents a renewed strengthening of the Paris-London axis. However, in my opinion, this does not go so far as to mean that England has given or would give any guarantees to France's allies in Central Europe. In my opinion, England will always leave this question open, but Delbos will nevertheless have traveled to the East with England's best wishes for the strengthening of its Central European alliances. According to local reports, Delbos's trip appears to have had the following objectives: first and foremost, to dissuade Poland and other states from joining the Anti-Comintern Pact; secondly, to consolidate his assistance pacts in Eastern Europe, and thirdly, to attempt to bring about a settlement between Poland and Czechoslovakia, and ultimately also to work towards a settlement with the Sudeten Germans in Prague, the latter in order not to give Germany any pretext for intervention here.

XI. Further handling of the Chamberlain initiative

There has been complete silence in the press, in parliament, etc. regarding the Halifax and Chautemps-Delbos visits and their possible further implications. As already reported, British experts are apparently currently examining here and French experts are examining

* "express" added by hand. ** Handwritten correction of "pursue the purpose."

* "express" added by hand. ** Handwritten correction of "to pursue the purpose."

Officials over there are working independently on the German colonial demand, and the dominions are also to be involved. At the same time, proposals for a political settlement in Europe and for quantitative arms limitation (budget) are to be drawn up. The intention is then to exchange views with France and make a proposal to Germany, with England acting as spokesman. It remains to be seen when this will happen, perhaps not before February/March, unless special events occur. I would assume that it may be even later. Whether a real, firm colonial offer will be made and what kind of political proposals will be made is not yet known beyond what has been reported so far, namely that something positive is to be offered in the colonial sphere and that, for the rest, consideration is being given primarily to the possibility of qualitative air restrictions and apparently also to political agreements on peacekeeping in Europe in the form of a written formulation of earlier non-aggression declarations by Germany to its neighbors (in particular, it seems, to Czechoslovakia); with regard to quantitative arms limitation, there is further talk of budget disclosure.

If one asks what prospects for success the Chamberlain initiative currently has, one comes to the

following conclusion:

There is no doubt that an English prime minister can, if he so wishes, take largely independent decisions on foreign policy matters. Chamberlain may have this intention, but the decisive factor is whether the maximum concessions he is willing to make can be reconciled with Germany's minimum demands. 'Great Britain and France are to give up colonial territory. In return they want peace in Europe. Peace in Europe in the Anglo-French sense means a guarantee for Czechoslovakia and, furthermore,

'armament limitation. As far as the Austrian question is concerned, it is not entirely out of the question that "at least in London, a special arrangement in some acceptable form would not necessarily be opposed."

'armament limitation. As far as the Austrian question is concerned, it is not entirely out of the question that "at least in London, one would not necessarily oppose a special arrangement in some acceptable form. The significance of the expected colonial concessions is difficult to determine. Should the colonial talks ultimately result in an offer that would mean an immediate major economic strengthening of the Reich, it would be necessary to reconsider whether we could accept certain temporary commitments in Europe, not as a quid pro quo, but at the same time. I myself am skeptical about the possibility and advisability of such a course of action. For this raises the key question for Germany: Does Germany want to commit itself legally and thus morally to the status quo in

Bind Europe? If we are fundamentally unable to do this and arms limitation is undoubtedly unworkable (the British themselves probably do not seriously believe in it), Chamberlain's initiative would gradually peter out. Of course, a final judgment can only be made once the proposals are on the table. These negotiations will also be a final test of whether there is still any prospect of a solution through friendly arrangements. If we realize that this is not the case—and I fear it is—but that they are only trying to stall us, we can prepare ourselves accordingly.

It seems important that we do not allow England to use any future negotiations as an alibi for propagating its desire for peace. It is conceivable, for example, that England and France might suddenly, at some moment they consider favorable for propaganda purposes, make a precise and sharply limited offer of "colonies for peace" to the world public.for peace," that is, colonies in exchange for guarantees for Czechoslovakia, to the world public. There is a certain danger here, and the rejection of such an apparently tempting offer could be interpreted as evidence of belligerent intentions on our part toward Czechoslovakia. This too could of course be countered by referring to the treatment of the Sudeten Germans, etc., but it seems better to me to insist on the most thorough preparation through diplomatic talks and exchanges of notes and to avoid any immediate discussions, conferences, etc. From this point of view, it is useful to discuss as many problems as possible at the same time.

The British apparently want this; in any case, as reported, they have officially expressed themselves in this sense. "We must take our friends with us step by step in the negotiations," said Lord Halifax. If we stick to this method, we can, in my opinion, play the Rome-Berlin axis as we wish, prevent the attribution of blame, and perhaps put the other axis in the wrong.

It is also possible that in the course of the negotiations, issues such as Austria and Czechoslovakia will

become increasingly ripe for world opinion in our favor. The colonial problem has also matured quickly, and the international trend toward revision is undoubtedly not yet complete. Ultimately, however, I believe that, even if this may be true for Austria, things will come to a head on the question of Czechoslovakia. Territorial revision of Czechoslovakia means, in my opinion, the beginning of the dissolution of this state and thus war. For the Czechs are relying on their French alliance |; h) (Russian help is at least problematic at present) and who would rather try to fight than give themselves up. Only |

\ ; if France or England officially declare their disinterest in the matter, 73

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If the Czechoslovakians were to declare that they would accept the German demands, the Czechs might agree to a peaceful, but for us hardly satisfactory, revision of the border.

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| in the sense of an autonomous Sudetenland. This will

; but France will not do so, nor will England, in my opinion. Even if England were to do so on its own, this would not prompt Prague to seek revision, because France would still be there, and the Czechs know full well that a Franco-German war would ultimately always find England on France's side. - This

consideration leads to the conclusion that the possibility of a territorial

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; "negotiations.

IT In summary, with regard to the further development of German-English relations, we must not allow ourselves to harbor any illusions, because, as the report shows, significant fundamental difficulties continue to stand in the way of lasting understanding between the two countries. The particular friendliness and warmth with which my colleagues and I have been treated by the British recently should not, in my opinion, obscure the fact that there are currently no signs of a truly significant shift in British policy toward an understanding in our sense. If Britain continues to try to block Germany in the future, there can be no doubt that the two countries will drift apart for good. Nevertheless, it seems right to me that our future policy toward England should remain aimed at reconciliation. The embassy will therefore continue to work consistently toward German-English understanding. However, this work toward understanding must not be allowed to damage our friendships. With the agreement of the local authorities, the embassy has therefore consistently treated the Berlin-Rome axis and our anti-Comintern relations with Japan as constant factors in our foreign policy toward England throughout this year.

Five days after writing his report "German Embassy London A 5522," Ribbentrop drafted the accompanying "Conclusions" on January 2, 1938, and sent the entire memorandum from Sonnenburg via Berlin to Hitler on the same day. In contrast to Ribbentrop's previously cited unpublished ambassadorial reports and the "A 5522," which was kept secret until 1968, the "Conclusions" were

used by the Nuremberg Tribunal as "evidence" against Ribbentrop. However, only point 5 on page 9 of the ten-page report was read out to Ribbentrop as a surprise document, so to speak. The complete document, the

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"conclusions" on "A 5522," was published in 1949 in the documentation of the International Court of Justice and in 1950 in the files on German foreign policy I.

"Conclusions" on "A 5522" were published in 1949 in the documentation of the International Court of Justice and in 1950 in the files on German foreign policy I.

In these "Conclusions" of January 2, 1938, which were intended only for Hitler and were not sent to Foreign Minister von Neurath at the same time as the more important evidence "A 5522" and the other ambassadorial reports from London, Ribbentrop emphasizes even more emphatically the English desire to encircle Germany. Here he explains in detail the reasons that had led Chamberlain to send Halifax to Germany. Unlike the report "A 5522," the "Conclusions" are not available in the original or in an original transcript, but only in copy:

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"Conclusions" on the report "German Embassy London A 5522"

Strictly confidential! For personal use only! Note for the Führer. Berlin, January 2, 1938.

Conclusions on the report "German Embassy London A 5522" on the future shape of German-English relations.

With the realization that Germany does not want to be bound by the status quo in Central Europe and that a military confrontation in Europe is possible sooner or later, hopes for an understanding between German-friendly English politicians—insofar as they are not merely playing a role assigned to them—are gradually fading. This raises the fateful question: will Germany and England inevitably drift into separate camps and one day march against each other again? To answer this question, we must consider the following:

A change in the status quo in the East in Germany's favor can only be achieved by force. As long as France knows that England, which has, so to speak, assumed liability for France vis-à-vis Germany, stands by it, France is likely to march to the aid of its eastern allies, at least in principle, and thus a German-English war is possible. This is true even if England does not want war; England, believing that it must defend its border on the Rhine, would simply be automatically drawn into it by France, i.e., France has it in its power to bring about a German-English war on the

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ways to force a Franco-German conflict. This in turn leads to the conclusion that a war between Germany and England over France can only be prevented if France knows from the outset that England's forces would not be sufficient to secure a joint victory. Such a situation could force England,

and thus France, to accept things that a strong Anglo-French alliance would never tolerate. This would be the case, for example, if England, due to insufficient armament or as a result of a threat to its empire by a superior power constellation (e.g., Germany-Italy-Japan) and the resulting tying down of its military forces elsewhere, were unable to provide France with sufficient support in Europe. As far as the question of the constellation of powers is concerned, this depends on further developments, on our alliance policy, and also on the further development of England's relations with America. It would be unfavorable for England if it were to face the aforementioned constellation alone and not yet sufficiently armed. However, this constellation would have to be firmly established, and there should be no doubt in the minds of England and France that Italy and Japan stand firmly by us and would, if necessary, deploy the combined forces of the constellation with decisive force. Italy and Japan have just as much interest in a strong Germany as we have in a strong Italy and Japan. The existence of the new Germany has been of great advantage to both of them in recent years in their expansionist efforts. By pointing this out and referring to common goals to be achieved later, it should be possible to persuade these two powers to declare their solidarity with us when the time comes. In such a situation, it would be possible for England to prevent France from intervening in the event of an eastern conflict between Germany and one of its allies, so that the conflict would remain localized and England would not be forced by French intervention to fight on three fronts, in East Asia, the Mediterranean, and Europe, under conditions that would be unfavorable for its global empire. In my opinion, England would not risk a fight for its global empire over a local Central European problem, even if it would significantly strengthen Germany. In such a case, France would hardly have the nerve to attack the German fortifications in the west on its own without England. In this context, the decisive factor seems to me to be the speed with which such a Central European conflict would be brought to a victorious conclusion. If success were achieved in a flash, I am certain that the West would not intervene. A longer duration, on the other hand, could give the enemy states the impression that Germany's forces were after all superior to theirs.

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would have been estimated, and this would have brought the moment of intervention by the Western powers closer.

For these reasons, I believe we still have an interest in strengthening the Berlin-Rome axis and the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo triangle, as well as in the accession of further states to this constellation. The stronger our constellation of friends, the easier it would be for England, and thus also France, to remain on the sidelines in the event of a conflict involving Germany in Central Europe, and the conflict could remain localized in our favor. I even believe that we should strengthen these friendships and forge new ones. Former French Prime Minister Flandin recently spoke in an article about constellations of states consisting of Germany, Italy, and Japan, and the two democracies of England and France plus Russia, each of which is striving to win as many states as possible to its cause. If one considers England's successful efforts in this regard in some countries — I mention, for example, Portugal, which is moving closer to England again and where the former private secretary of Austen Chamberlain (Selby) recently arrived, and Turkey, where Sir Percy Lorraine, one of England's best diplomats, has strongly influenced the Turks in a pro-English direction — this information seems to have come to Flandin from his English friends. Above all, however, England will continue to strive to weaken the Berlin-Rome axis and to break up the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo triangle. Influential circles in England are constantly working towards an understanding between England and Italy and also Japan. The Foreign Office sent its best official, Sir Robert Craigie, to Japan in the summer. In order to protect the heart of the British

Empire, I believe that England will do everything in its power at the appropriate time to restore good relations with Italy and Japan, even at great sacrifice, i.e., to buy out Germany. In my opinion, Germany, Italy, and Japan must stand together firmly, because that is where the strength of their position in the world lies, and it seems advisable for all three states to seek friendship with even the smallest state within their reach. In my opinion, even in terms of news and propaganda, one can hardly have enough such friends in an emergency. It would be dangerous to reject other options because of an uncertain friendship with England and to turn down secure friendships. This could leave one sitting between two stools. Whether it is better to establish or maintain this or that friendship in a loose form for the time being, or whether it is better to include this or that friendship in some form, e.g., in the anti-Comintern movement, should, in my opinion, be decided on a case-by-case basis.

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As far as England is concerned, our policy should, in my opinion, continue to be aimed at reconciliation while fully safeguarding the interests of our friends. We must continue to reinforce England's belief that a compromise and understanding between Germany and England are ultimately possible. This prospect could, for example, also have a restraining effect on any intentions of the English government to intervene in the event of a local conflict involving Germany in Central Europe that does not vitally affect England. It is probably better if our emerging constellation is kept in a somewhat looser form for the time being. In the long run, however, this will not change the fact that the formation of two opposing fronts will inevitably become clearer over time. The question of whether a German-English compromise can then still be found at all can, in my opinion, be answered as follows:

If England stands stronger with its alliances with Germany and its friends, it will, in my opinion, always prevail sooner or later. If, on the other hand, Germany succeeds in shaping its alliance policy in such a way that a German constellation stands stronger or perhaps equal to an English one, it is possible that England would prefer to try to reach a compromise after all. However, with the fronts entrenched, a sudden compromise between the multifaceted interests seems to me normally unthinkable. It could only be attempted by two opposing states, at the expense of their partners in the constellation. Following this line of thought, one could theoretically imagine, for example, that England, faced with a superior constellation, would suddenly offer Germany a far-reaching compromise. Such a 180° shift in policy has occurred frequently in history, when wars were still personal affairs of monarchs and the peoples often did not even know what they were fighting for. It is hardly conceivable in our modern, politicized world today, and certainly not feasible in democracies. However, Germany's quid pro quo for such an offer could only come at the expense of its friends. In my opinion, such a policy is not possible for Germany. Apart from all other reasons, such a policy of vacillation would entail an enormous risk, namely that of isolation, for what guarantee could Germany obtain from England that it would keep such an offer forced by necessity? It seems to me that no such guarantee exists at all.

On the question of whether a German-English understanding is still possible, it must therefore be said that, while the fronts are loose, such an agreement is still conceivable in itself. However, as can be seen from the enclosed report and this note, it is very

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difficult because Germany wants to shape its future differently than England appears willing to grant us

in a union with Germany (see also the attached letter from Lord Londonderry). Only energetic action by the British Prime Minister in our interest and against the significant resistance mentioned above can perhaps give things a new turn. One could imagine that an English Prime Minister who is not gripped by the psychosis of German strength and German will to power, but who fundamentally believes in the possibility of German-English friendship, would still be willing to seek a generous, sober compromise that satisfies German aspirations without jeopardizing vital, purely English interests. This is the thesis that Garvin has been arguing so emphatically in The Observer in recent months. When I recently asked Chamberlain for his opinion on Garvin's latest articles, he simply replied, "They are too long for me to read!" A clear English concession on the Austro-Czech question in line with our thinking could have a cleansing effect on Europe. However, based on my experience to date, I consider such a turn of events unlikely and believe that England would, at most, one day be forced by circumstances to tolerate such a solution. I am reinforced in my view that this problem cannot be solved through official negotiations with England by the fact that Chamberlain is stuck in a system, both domestically and in foreign policy (with France), that makes major decisions infinitely difficult.

Once the fronts have hardened, only very special, abnormal shifts in power or events in Europe or the world (Bolshevization of France, collapse of Russia, serious changes among our friends) could push political developments in a different direction. However, one cannot base a policy on such possibilities. Therefore, in my opinion, it is right to continue along the lines of our foreign policy.

In conclusion, I would like to summarize my views in the following key points:

1. England is lagging behind with its :-: armaments - :-: therefore it is playing for time.

2. England believes that in a race with Germany, time is on its side - it can exploit its greater economic potential for rearmament and use the time to expand its alliances (e.g. with America).

3. Halifax's visit should therefore be regarded as a :-: reconnaissance and cover-up maneuver :-: - even Germany's friends in England are in many cases merely playing the role assigned to them.

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4. :--: England and its Prime Minister :-: in my opinion, after the Halifax visit :-: no basis for agreement with Germany that seems possible to them :-: they believe National Socialist Germany is capable of anything, just as we believe the English are capable of anything - they therefore fear that a strong Germany will one day force them to accept solutions that are not to their liking - in order to counter this :-: England is preparing :-: in any case, with its military and political measures :-: for a confrontation with Germany. :-:

5. The conclusion to be drawn by us is therefore:

1. Continue to engage with England while safeguarding the interests of our friends.

2. Quietly but tenaciously establish an alliance against England—i.e., in practical terms, consolidate our friendships with Italy and Japan—and also win over all states whose interests are directly or indirectly in line with ours—close and confidential cooperation between the diplomats of the three great powers to this end. Only in this way can we face England, whether one day in reconciliation or in

conflict. England will be a tough and fierce opponent in this diplomatic game.

6. The specific question of whether France and thus England would intervene in the event of a conflict involving Germany in Central Europe depends on the circumstances and the timing of the outbreak and end of such a conflict, as well as on military considerations that cannot be overlooked here. I would like to present a few points of view on this matter to the Führer verbally.

This is my view of the situation after careful consideration of all the circumstances. I have worked for years to establish friendship with England and would be delighted if this could be achieved. When I asked the Führer to send me to London, I was skeptical that it would work, but in view of Edward VIII, a final attempt seemed necessary. Today, I no longer believe in understanding. England does not want an overpowering Germany in its vicinity that would be a constant threat to its islands. It will fight for this. But National Socialism is believed to be capable of great things. Baldwin already recognized this, and Edward VIII had to abdicate because it was not certain whether he would go along with a policy hostile to Germany. Chamberlain has now appointed Vansittart, our most important and tenacious opponent, to a position where he can play a leading role in the diplomatic game against Germany. Every day in the future—no matter what tactical maneuvers are attempted to reach an understanding with us—our political considerations must be fundamentally guided by the idea of Eng-

If our country were designated as our most dangerous enemy, :--: it would be a victory for our enemies. :-: signed R. (IMT XXXIX, Doc. 075-TC).

At the heart of this major memorandum on England was the assertion, which Ribbentrop had already emphatically emphasized to Hitler in the summer of 1936, that the concept of power-political equilibrium in Europe remained as ever the fundamental principle of British policy. Any shift in the balance to the detriment of the island nation would compel the English leadership to intervene diplomatically and ultimately also militarily.

Ribbentrop warned against overestimating the significance of Halifax's visit. It was merely a fact-finding mission aimed at gaining time and providing Chamberlain with an alibi for having left no stone unturned in his efforts to reach an agreement. Since the Empire Conference in the summer of 1937, the prime minister knew that he had to provide this proof in order not to alienate the dominions from England. As British prime minister, he could not risk a break with the dominions. The Halifax Mission did not seek to reach a compromise with Germany, but rather to accommodate the Dominions' pressure and desire for appeasement.

Ribbentrop called such attempts "the traditional English tendency to collect arguments for the question of guilt in a possible war."

Ribbentrop called such attempts "the traditional English tendency to collect arguments for the question of guilt in a possible war." At the time, the German ambassador could not even have imagined how prophetic this statement would prove to be. When Chamberlain presented his infamous Anglo-German declaration to Hitler on September 30, 1938, one day after the Munich Conference, the Prime Minister's Chancellor signed his second alibi.

Ribbentrop also picks up on Eden's remark about England as a "nation of shopkeepers" that he made when London refused to return even one German colony. (Ribbentrop report, Cito! Top secret!

London, December 2, 1937. No. 470, ADAP Series D, Vol. I, Doc. 50.) Ribbentrop was convinced that slogans such as "nation of shopkeepers" were "fundamentally never" applicable to the character of the English leadership. He credited this class with a "heroic outlook on life." This was associated above all with "a sense of power, a will to rule, and material egoism." For the sake of England's position of power in the world, this British ruling class would offer everything and even risk war. Should the

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better chances on the British side, Ribbentrop warned, "England will always fight!" Ribbentrop did not consider the English decadent, as the conspirators claimed at the time and as is still repeated in almost every historical or political treatise today. On the contrary, he was convinced that England would always fight if it ever found itself in a stronger position vis-à-vis Germany. The influential circles in the Foreign Office remained committed to the political line that Sir Eyre Crowe had declared imperative for English power aspirations in 1907. Their goal today, he said, was once again the systematic encirclement of the Reich. The "unconditional" opponents of Germany formed the majority in the British leadership camp. And even by 1937, the number of "conditional" friends of the Reich no longer constituted a significant political force. Ribbentrop emphasized that even these were skeptical of German assurances of peace. He stated quite openly that Chamberlain and Halifax "are not among those who still believe in the possibility of a friendly arrangement with Germany."

Ribbentrop now assessed the prospects for a German-English settlement more pessimistically than in his conversation with the Reich Chancellor in the summer of 1936 and in his quoted coronation report of May 1937. Ribbentrop doubted that Chamberlain would use his power to actively work toward an understanding between Berlin and London, and he questioned whether it was even possible to achieve a synthesis between the maximum concessions Britain was willing to make and the minimum revisions Germany desired. Even a correction of the Eastern European settlement dictated at Versailles threatened to embroil England and France in a military conflict with the Reich. A military confrontation was therefore a possibility. Ribbentrop repeatedly tried to win the British over to the German point of view that once the Reich had regained its ideological and material equality, it would, as a satisfied and saturated nation, make its contribution to the European peace order. Germany had a great interest in preserving the British Empire, especially since it could never be considered its heir.

The concluding remarks of this historically significant memorandum make two things clear: Ribbentrop sees no signs of a real shift in British policy toward an understanding in the German sense. Furthermore,

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his fear grew that the two nations would drift apart for good if England continued to block Germany's vital interests. And yet he emphatically advocated continuing to pursue a German foreign policy aimed at reconciliation with Great Britain. But he warned against British obfuscation tactics, which he said were a hallmark of English diplomacy. In this context, he recalled Britain's attitude before 1914, when it concealed its intentions so well that Germany's foreign policy collapsed when Britain unexpectedly entered the war. Even in 1937, Ribbentrop emphasized, there were still politicians who assumed that England had been dragged into the world war and had not deliberately worked toward the encirclement of Germany.

Ribbentrop's diagnosis and his warning about future British tactics are confirmed by Eden's instructions to Halifax and Henderson in October 1937 and Sir Robert Vansittart's ongoing diary entries, according

to which Germany must again be kept "guessing" until, as in 1914, war would finally follow. In contrast to his predecessor at the London embassy, Prince Lichnowski, who in August 1914 was dismayed by the declaration of war handed to him by Sir Edward Grey, as this official step stood in stark contrast to his excellent personal relations with the British statesmen of the time, Ribbentrop was not deceived by the "special friendliness and warmth" shown to him and his staff in London. Since the German ambassador saw through the British policy of concealing its true intentions and had therefore not fallen victim to the English tactic of "guesswork," he became enemy No. 1 for the British.

Ribbentrop was convinced that England and France would not agree to a change in the status quo in the East. This statement, which was also a warning to German foreign policy not to assert, however justified, demands for revision of the German eastern borders established at Versailles, did not go unheard by Hitler. Hitler did not fail to hear this warning to exercise caution in asserting even justified demands for revision of the German eastern borders established at Versailles, for ten months later, on October 24, 1938, he instructed Ribbentrop to submit to the Polish ambassador in Berlin, Lipski, the well-known proposal for a lasting settlement of the outstanding problems between Berlin and Warsaw. This German proposal did not demand any territorial concessions from Poland.

victim, but merely a revision based on mutual respect of the Versailles dictate, which poisoned German-Polish relations: the return of the 96% German city of Danzig to the Reich and a one-kilometer-wide extraterritorial road and railway for Germany through the corridor to East Prussia. Poland was also to receive the same extraterritorial roads through the Danzig area to Gdynia and a free port in the city of Danzig, as well as a guarantee for the purchase of Polish products.

One possible reason why Ribbentrop supplemented his memorandum "A 5522," which he had drafted only a few days earlier, with the "Conclusions" is the fact that Chamberlain had appointed Sir Robert Vansittart as "Chief Advisor to the British Foreign Secretary" the previous day, January 1, 1938. While some speculated at the time whether this appointment of the former "Permanent Under-Secretary of State in the Foreign Office" represented a "certain demotion" or a "special honor and promotion" (ADAP, Series D, Vol. I, Doc. No. 95), Ribbentrop had no doubt that Vansittart's newly assigned role would significantly expand his political sphere of influence. Ribbentrop famously characterized Vansittart as "our most important and tenacious opponent," who was now able to "intervene at any time in the diplomatic game against Germany."

From the British point of view, it was crucial that Vansittart could act even more easily and freely in his new position. Sir Horace Wilson held a similar position in the economy, having been Chief Industrial Adviser to the Prime Minister since 1930. Both Vansittart and Wilson were in close contact with the German conspirators. (For Vansittart's connections, see Colvin, Vansittart, p. 125f.)

In response to Chamberlain's decision on January 1, 1938, to involve Vansittart in a decisive role in British policy toward Germany, Ribbentrop demanded in his "Conclusions" of the following day, even more emphatically than in "A 5522," the consolidation of Germany's alliances with Italy and Japan, with the involvement of all states pursuing interests similar to those of Germany. This, Ribbentrop writes, is the only way to be able to face England one day, whether for reconciliation or conflict! Again, as in "A 5522," Ribbentrop expresses his conviction to Hitler that England will fight if it is stronger than Germany.

He called the mission of Lord Halifax – known in some London circles as "Lord Holy-Fox" – a reconnaissance and cover-up maneuver. Ribbentrop could not have described this visit more aptly, even though he was unaware of the instructions given to Halifax, according to which official German politicians were to be kept "guessing" about the actual British political objectives. In Ribbentrop's view, England was already preparing for a confrontation with the Reich through its military and political measures. Particularly in view of Vansittart's significant promotion, Ribbentrop no longer believed in an understanding! England, he warned, would not tolerate a strengthened Germany in its vicinity. Ribbentrop also had no illusions about another fact: "England will be a tough and fierce opponent in this diplomatic game." In these "conclusions," he emphatically reiterates his commitment to a diplomatic solution. He concludes his "Conclusions" with an almost prophetic warning about British obfuscation tactics: "Every day in the future—no matter what tactical interludes of understanding with us may be attempted—in which our political considerations are not fundamentally determined by the idea of England as our most dangerous enemy will be a gain for our enemies." As an example of the unreliability of translations, it should be noted here that in the English and American editions of the Akten zur Deutschen Auswärtigen Politik (Documents on German Foreign Policy), this concluding sentence is distorted by the use of the word "enemy" in both cases, whereas Ribbentrop deliberately used only the word "adversary" for the English. (DBFP I, Series D, Doc. No. 93.)

Therefore, the authenticity of point 5 in the "Conclusions" must also be questioned, where it states under 1. and 2.: "Outwardly, continue to seek understanding with England while safeguarding the interests of our friends... but quietly and with complete tenacity, an alliance against England..." In "German-English Secret Connections," it is explained in detail why this wording cannot correspond to Ribbentrop's original text. Firstly, no similar demand can be found in the main texts of his two reports, and secondly, there was nothing at the time that needed to be prepared quietly. On the contrary, Ribbentrop writes at the end of his "A 5522" that despite all skepticism, "our future policy toward England remains aimed at compromise. The message

will therefore continue to work consistently toward a German-English understanding.... With this in mind, the embassy, with your agreement, has again this year treated the Berlin-Rome axis, as well as our anti-Comintern relationship with Japan, as constant factors in our foreign policy in its dealings with the UK." England was thus officially informed of the German alliance constellation. In his extensive reports as German ambassador in London, Ribbentrop had repeatedly drawn the attention of the German head of state to the need to "take all possibilities into account" when assessing "England's future attitude," adding: "It was up to the Führer to draw the conclusions from this." (Ribbentrop, Zwischen London und Moskau, p. 114.)

In contrast to Ribbentrop, who had correctly assessed the trip by the British Lord Privy Seal as a reconnaissance and cover-up maneuver, the then Ministerial Director von Weizsäcker believed, or at least pretended to believe, after the Hitler-Halifax meeting that "England is still wavering today as to whether it should buy peace in Europe by making concessions," and on December 22, 1937, he recommended "keeping England in a state of indecision for as long as possible." Foreign Minister von Neurath commented on this: "and not to eliminate the existing areas of friction in the Mediterranean and East Asia too quickly." (ADAPI, Doc. 86 and note 3; author's note) This was advice from the Foreign Office, which advised Hitler that England would grant the Reich a certain, albeit "not unlimited, respite" in order to "fully satisfy German grievances by peaceful means" (ibid.).

All of Ribbentrop's ambassadorial reports from London, which, in addition to the "conclusions," were also sent to Foreign Minister von Neurath personally or in three additional copies to the Foreign Office, were filed by Weizsäcker in the Political Department, as the editors of the ADAP noted. Weizsäcker therefore knew that Ribbentrop had reported to Hitler in detail throughout 1937 on England's determination to fight and its intention to encircle Germany, and that he had finally expressed his conviction in "A 5522" that the British leadership, which alone was decisive, would not shy away from war. Weizsäcker even sent "A 5522" with an approving comment to Prince Bismarck of the Political Department and to Legation Councilor von Rintelen. (ADAP I, Doc. 100.) As will be seen, all this did not prevent the German state

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Secretary von Weizsäcker did not believe that, over the course of the next few months, there would be any

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repeatedly make false claims about Ribbentrop's assessment of

future British attitude would be spread, both in conversations and in the press.

future English attitude, both in conversations

' with his friends from the circle of conspirators and to foreign diplomats. For example, Henderson to Halifax on September 1, 1938! (DBFP I, No. 736)

' with his friends from the circle of conspirators and with foreign diplomats. For example, Henderson to Halifax on September 1, 1938! (DBFP I, No. 736.) It was not Ribbentrop, but the officials in the Wilhelmstraße who advised Hitler that England would not fight.

" The slander against Ribbentrop is refuted by Ribbentrop's main report "A 5522." The alleged image of England held by Ribbentrop, invented by the conspirators, spread by war propaganda, used by the Nuremberg prosecutors, and elaborated and signed by contemporary historians, was put out into the world as a forgery, against better knowledge. The Nuremberg Tribunal sanctioned these slanders and preserved them for posterity.

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concealment made the assertion that Hitler was

concealment made the assertion that Hitler was aware of Ribbentrop's

had been misinformed by Ribbentrop about the British attitude toward Germany.
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, was possible in the first place – as long as the main report

"A 5522" had not reappeared! This document

"A 5522" had not reappeared! This gives the

short "conclusions" even more weight. This most important,

most meaningful key document, which is Ribbentrop's main report, was withheld from the former Reich Foreign Minister in Nuremberg and stored in the Foreign Office Library in London.

most meaningful key document, which constitutes Ribbentrop's main report, was withheld from the former Reich Foreign Minister in Nuremberg and locked away in the Foreign Office Library in London.

. Thus, after 1945, the Weizsäckers, Kordts, Schmidts, and

. Thus, after 1945, the Weizsäckers, Kordts, Schmidts, and

had free rein. In order to implement their own conspiratorial and treasonous

treasonous activities, they used Ribbentrop.

treasonous activities, they used Ribbentrop.

The lie of Erich Kordt

At the beginning of February 1938, the Blomberg-Fritsch crisis led to the reshuffling of several high-ranking military and civilian leadership positions in the Reich. Hitler appointed Ribbentrop as Reich Minister of Foreign Affairs. Ribbentrop's appointment caused an audible stir in the international press and among the diplomatic corps.

The comment by the American Embassy in London is interesting. On February 7, 1938, Herschel V. Johnson, Chargé d'Affaires ad interim, telegraphed Washington: "Both British officials and public opinion have become considerably more aware of the power and ability of the German

leave the army, so that it would act as a brake on the Nazi hotheads." Johnson went on to telegraph that it was now time "for Great Britain to complete its rearmament and achieve a lasting settlement in Europe." He concluded by noting: "Ribbentrop was unsuccessful in London, and London was unsuccessful with Ribbentrop." (Johnson to Secretary of State Hull, No. 106, February 7, 1938, 5 p.m., State Department, file 862.00/3727.) There was more than rhetorical elegance behind this play on words. Johnson could hardly have known how right he was. Ribbentrop admitted to Hitler in a memorandum that his London mission had not achieved its actual goal, for Hitler's parting words from 1936, "Ribbentrop, bring me the English alliance!" had fallen on deaf ears in Britain. London had rejected Germany's intentions. But the American had also hit the nail on the head with his second remark, probably without being aware of its deeper meaning. For London had tried unsuccessfully to deceive Ribbentrop and, through him, the Reich government. The British had not succeeded in keeping Ribbentrop in the dark about future British policy.

The State Department in Washington showed keen interest in the government reshuffle in Germany, and Herschel V. Johnson was able to satisfy their curiosity. Erich Kordt led the way. One day after his telegram of February 7, 1938, Johnson sent Kordt's version of report A.5522 as "Strictly Confidential" to Secretary of State Hull in Washington. It was read with great interest by the head of the European Department, J. Pierrepont Moffat, and Under Secretary Sumner Welles, as well as by Dunn, advisor on political issues, and George S. Messersmith, Assistant Secretary of State. Johnson reported under the heading:

"Mr. von Ribbentrop's impression of his stay in London":

...First and foremost, Ribbentrop was a failure in London. He was a failure because he came here with certain fixed objectives and because he did not achieve those objectives. On the first day after his arrival, he made it clear that his mission in this country was to make the British government and the British people recognize the danger of communism. But they still maintain today that...

They remained firmly committed to the same opinion they had expressed to Mr. Ribbentrop upon his arrival in October 1936: The Führer is convinced that there is only one real danger for Europe and also for the British Empire, and that is the further spread of communism, this most terrible of all diseases. Terrible because people generally do not recognize this danger until it is too late. Closer cooperation between our two countries in this sense is not only important, but a vital necessity in the general struggle to preserve our civilization and our culture. (Ribbentrop's statement upon arrival in London.) Secondly, Mr. von Ribbentrop wanted to obtain colonial concessions from Great Britain, and it was added that he wanted to acquire them solely for the purpose of becoming the first Reich Minister for the Colonies.

Even though Mr. von Ribbentrop gained power in a different way than he had anticipated, his experience in London, both politically and personally, nevertheless left its mark on his worldview. He did not achieve his political goals. In his personal relationships, he was not only unable to charm, but also failed to feel at ease. Neither Mr. von Ribbentrop nor Mrs. von Ribbentrop liked London. They had no success here and few friends outside the Anglo-German friendship circle of Lord Mount Temple and Lord Londonderry. It is clear that Ribbentrop wanted to do much more than just convert converts, because not only was the German embassy renovated at a cost of thousands of pounds—at a time when foreign currency was scarce—but he also brought with him a number of young men with important connections, such as the current Grand Duke of Hesse, a great-grandson of Queen Victoria. And these were to use their influence to help Mr. von Ribbentrop rise to the highest ranks of society...

I – Johnson – have been told privately and in the strictest confidence by a personal aide that Mr. von Ribbentrop wrote what he called his swan song on Anglo-German relations at the beginning of December before his departure for Germany. Like all his reports, this memorandum was addressed to Mr. Hitler, with a copy going to Baron von Neurath. According to my informant, the German ambassador to Great Britain summarized his view of the situation as follows:

That the British were a degenerate but hardened people. That they refused to recognize the significance of the communist threat, as well as the role that Germany played as a bulwark of civilization. That no return of the German colonies could be expected on terms acceptable to Germany. That the Paris-London axis could not be easily broken, certainly not at the London end, but that it was worth trying

from the Paris end. That time was on Germany's side, and that it was necessary to

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It should be allowed to pursue its goals and fulfill its historic destiny unhindered by British opposition because, to use the words of my informant, "a kick in the butt now and then wouldn't hurt the English."

It is also clear to me that, contrary to the impression Field Marshal von Blomberg gained of British power and solidity during his visit last year, Mr. von Ribbentrop is not impressed by England's power, and this is not because he is discouraged by the possibility of an Anglo-German understanding—his kind of understanding—but because he now believes that England can be largely disregarded. As the founder of the Berlin-Tokyo-Rome world triangle and the anti-Comintern principle, it is expected that his foreign policy will develop in this direction. As an outspoken opponent of Lord Halifax's visit to Berlin, he is also not expected to be an advocate of that generation which the British Government considers indispensable for the conclusion of a Western European settlement, as Mr. Eden has clearly stated. (Message No. 98, February 4, 1938, 8 p.m.)

It may be worth noting that the appointment of Mr. von Ribbentrop as foreign minister comes as a very unpleasant surprise to those who determine British foreign policy. This is all the more so as they are eagerly awaiting the arrival of the Privy Cabinet Council in Berlin in the hope of thereby recognizing the real power over foreign affairs in Germany, because they are aware of Mr. von Ribbentrop's bias and lack of understanding, which his stay in London revealed and underlined. They also know that he left wounded in his vanity.

It must also be said that, as things stand, official and social London—which are inseparable—has not played its cards well with the German ambassador... They did not like his stubbornness with regard to the communist threat... They came to the conclusion that, in the words of Lloyd George on another occasion, negotiating with him was tantamount to trying to pick up mercury balls with a fork, because he always spoke but never listened, and because he tried to teach but not to learn. They—the British—no doubt regret all this, because they now have to negotiate with this instrument under even greater difficulties." (Johnson to Hull, London, February 8, 1938, No. 3897. Strictly confidential. State Department file 862.00/3745.)

It is immediately apparent that Johnson misrepresents Ribbentrop's memorandum "A 5522" in his letter to Hull. He had obtained his information from a "personal associate" of Ribbentrop. That was Dr. Erich Kordt, head of the London embassy office and responsible for registering the files.

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We know from Kordt that there were forces within the Foreign Office who, even after the German-Polish non-aggression pact of January 1934 and the successful conclusion of the German-British naval agreement of June 1935, sought to prevent any further foreign policy successes by Hitler.

As Ribbentrop's shadow, Dr. Erich Kordt accompanied the German ambassador to London. As a legation councilor, he saw his main task as sabotaging Ribbentrop's efforts to reach a compromise in the English capital and, in accordance with the instructions of State Secretary von Bülow, waiting for the ambassador to make the mistakes he hoped he would. Kordt admits in his conspiratorial apology

that he immediately passed on everything "important" to his "friends," who mainly belonged to the Foreign Office. (Kordt, Nicht aus den Akten, p. 94ff.) Among the most important information that Kordt provided to English circles free of charge were Ribbentrop's reports to Hitler, which were immediately passed on to them.

Kordt launched the smear campaign against Ribbentrop. His omissions are no less important than his deliberate distortions and blatant falsifications of the foreign policy program in Ribbentrop's memorandum "A 5522." Whenever Kordt addresses the content of the statements, he turns them into their exact opposite. Ribbentrop writes of England as our "most dangerous enemy." Kordt, on the other hand, claims that Ribbentrop recommended "ignoring England," even though Ribbentrop warns at the end of his memorandum that Hitler must not forget England as the "most dangerous enemy" for a single day, because that would be a victory for Germany's "enemies."

Ribbentrop does not mention Kordt's assertion that England refuses to "recognize the significance of the communist threat or the role that Germany plays as a bulwark of civilization." On the contrary, Ribbentrop reported that London is trying to prevent the Bolshevization of France in order to secure England's continental flank. According to his own information, the British diplomat Sir Charles Mendl had "distributed many millions in France in recent years, especially to combat communism." Ribbentrop makes no mention of Germany's role as an anti-communist bulwark. There is no mention in "A 5522" that Germany wanted to bend the London-Paris axis at the French end, as Kordt claims according to Johnson. Ribbentrop had no illusions about the ties between Paris and London. On the contrary, he emphasized that

the visit of French statesmen Chautemps and Delbos to London at the end of November 1937 "had once again strengthened the Anglo-French axis."

Ribbentrop was not, as Kordt-Johnson claimed, an "outspoken opponent" of a visit by Halifax. Against his better judgment, Kordt spread yet another piece of misinformation. Ribbentrop had never underestimated British power. It was former Reich Chancellor Dr. Brüning who conveyed the following view of Field Marshal von Blomberg in a secret letter to London. Blomberg, who visited London on the occasion of the coronation celebrations in May 1937, returned to Berlin unimpressed by "British power potential and solidity." He criticized General von Fritsch and other officers of the German General Staff for their defeatist attitude and accused them of "their fear of England being completely unfounded, because it would not oppose Germany, no matter what the Reich undertook on the continent. It was Blomberg's opinion, but not Ribbentrop's, as Kordt claimed to Johnson, that the English were completely harmless to Germany. Brüning had received this secret information through intermediaries from Fritsch and Beck and commented that "General Blomberg is making the same mistake that many Germans who travel to England and the United States are making." They all allowed themselves to be deceived by the friendly overtures. Blomberg's statements and assertions had led to "the position of Fritsch and Beck becoming considerably more uncomfortable and difficult, and that their position would be undermined if this development continued." In light of Brüning's statement, the Blomberg crisis takes on new significance. (Recording of a conversation by George S. Messersmith, Washington, December 27, 1937. Strictly confidential. Contents: Remarks by Dr. Brüning during a private conversation. State Department file 762.00/153.)

The grossest falsification that Kordt allowed the American Johnson to put out into the world is the claim that Ribbentrop, in his memorandum "A 5522," described the British as a "degenerate people"

who could be "largely disregarded" in the future, so that Hitler could proceed "undisturbed in the pursuit of his goals and historical destiny" and completely ignore England. To use the crude language of Johnson's informants, "a kick in the buttocks of the English would do no harm." Kordt's vocabulary included

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"Kick them!" Later, he instructed the British, for example, to "kick the German rulers hard in the shins every time they behave too unjustly" – should kick them and kick them hard. (Vernon Bartlett to Sir Orme Sargent. London, July 22, 1938. FO 371/21657. C 7461.)

For Ribbentrop, the concept of the "balance of power" remained the fundamental principle of British policy.

When Ribbentrop left England, he was not "wounded in his vanity," as Kordt claimed. On the contrary, Ribbentrop characterized his personal position in the last paragraph of "A 5522" by saying that he and his colleagues had recently been treated with "particular friendliness and warmth" by the British, without, however, allowing themselves to be impressed by this. The further assertion that Ribbentrop was unable to "listen" is refuted by all his reports, in which he informed Berlin in minute detail of what he had heard from and about the British statesmen. His memorandum is also not a "swan song" with regard to German-British relations, for despite all his skepticism, Ribbentrop recommends continuing to work steadily toward German-British understanding, taking into account Germany's friendships with Rome and Tokyo, which are well known to the British.

Although Ribbentrop had no illusions about the British desire for compromise, which was often feigned, he reaffirmed in his diplomatic talks and personal conversations his willingness to continue working for German-British reconciliation. Göring warned Ambassador Henderson "not to make the big mistake of classifying Ribbentrop as anti-British." As foreign minister, Göring emphasized, Ribbentrop would continue to work for an understanding with England. (Henderson to the Foreign Office. Berlin, February 18, 1938. No. 50. Strictly confidential. FO 371/21655, C 1161.) When Ribbentrop traveled to London in mid-March 1938 after his appointment as foreign minister to take his leave from the British government as ambassador, he repeatedly took the opportunity to remind his interlocutors of the necessity of German-British cooperation. His London friends "can rely on him as a colleague" to work toward this goal. (Recording of a conversation with Thomas Inskip, Minister of Defense. London, March 11, 1938. Letter to Lord Halifax. FO 800/313.) After the German ambassador von Dirksen took up his post in London, Ribbentrop assured him

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his full support in the attempt to improve German-English relations. (Henderson to Sir A. Cadogan. Berlin, May 2, 1938. FO 800/269.) The new American ambassador in Berlin, Hugh R. Wilson, was also convinced of Ribbentrop's sincerity. In June 1938, he finally wanted to find out for himself "what kind of person" Ribbentrop actually was. In a "tour d'horizon," they discussed problems of international politics. Wilson gained the impression that Ribbentrop was "an intelligent man with great faith ... in Hitler, with a good deal of stubbornness and an ability to argue and discuss a particular point. He is a much greater man than I believed – influenced by François-Poncet's and Henderson's descriptions." (Wilson to Pierre-pont Moffat. Personal and confidential. Berlin, June 15, 1938. Moffat estate, Harvard University Library, Houghton Library.) "Deeply moved," Ribbentrop spoke about England and his own desire "for friendship" with Great Britain. (Henderson refers here to Wilson's conversation with

Ribbentrop. Henderson to Sir A. Cadogan. Berlin, June 28, 1938. FO 800/269.)

Just a few days after Ribbentrop was appointed Reich Minister, Sumner Welles summoned the German ambassador in Washington to the State Department to discuss political developments in Germany. Dieckhoff sensed that the American undersecretary had received damaging information about Ribbentrop. However, he had no idea that Johnson's report, which reproduced the contents of the memorandum "A 5522" forged by Kordt, had just arrived in Washington. Dieckhoff reminded Welles that he was Ribbentrop's brother-in-law and that he therefore knew the Reich Foreign Minister "very well personally" – that for that reason he knew him intimately. He said that Ribbentrop was younger, but also a little more "impulsive" than Neurath. Hitler had come to appreciate him very early on. After his appointment as Foreign Minister, Ribbentrop had reassured Dieckhoff that an agreement between London and Berlin was still "the outstanding cardinal point" of German policy. He would continue to work toward a compromise between the two nations in the future. (Conversation transcript. Sumner Welles. Confidential. Washington, February 8, 1938. Contents: Recent developments in Germany. State Department file 862.00/3722 1/2.)

The systematic campaign against Ribbentrop dates back at least to the time of the Johnson report with Kordt's falsified summary of "A 5522." It is well known that

Adenauer after the founding of the Federal Republic did not appoint Dr. Erich Kordt to the Foreign Service, stating: "Kordt thwarted Ribbentrop's policies and he will also betray me." } In the Foreign Office in Berlin, it was primarily State Secretary Br Weizsäcker who devoted all his energy and working hours to spreading falsehoods about Ribbentrop.

Ribbentrop was assigned a central role in the conspiracy strategy because it was safer to discredit the foreign minister than the head of state. Weizsäcker embodied the "anti-Ribbentrop principle" in the Foreign Office, as co-conspirator Hasso von Etzdorf explained in the Wilhelmstraße trial. (Harold C. Deutsch: Verschwörung gegen den Krieg, Der Widerstand in den Jahren 1939-1940. Munich 1969. p. 18.) Kosthorst writes that the "anti-Ribbentrop effect" had become a "kind of monomania" for Weizsäcker. The state secretary threw "sand in the works" of the Foreign Office and saw his main task as destroying Ribbentrop's reputation and standing as an expert on England. (Kosthorst. Bonn 1957. p. 80.) His goal was to bring about the downfall of the regime. The smear campaign against Ribbentrop served as a tool to break up the National Socialist government from within. In the Wilhelmstraße trial in 1946, Weizsäcker testified: "It would have been enough for me if, in talks with the enemy, nothing else had come out except the assurance that foreign countries would not negotiate with Mr. Ribbentrop, for example. Then at least we would have begun to see where the obstacle lay, namely in the personnel. And my calculation was that if one stone broke away from the building, the rest would follow." (Erich Kosthorst. Die deutsche Opposition gegen Hitler zwischen Polen- und Frankreichfeldzug [The German Opposition to Hitler between the Polish and French Campaigns]. Bonn 1957. 3rd edition. p. 80.)

Colvin pursued the same goal in the summer of 1939 when he traveled to Berlin to gather information for the Foreign Office. He met secretly with Weizsäcker and other representatives of the German conspiracy group, who urged him to "intensify the barrage against Ribbentrop." If they succeeded in forcing him out of the German cabinet, the great "landslide" would soon be triggered. (Colvin secret memorandum, July 17, 1939. FO 371/22975, C 10057.) The caricature of Ribbentrop was the linchpin of the entire conspiracy strategy. It was incorporated into the preparations for the coup as explosive material to blow up the government. This also included the insinuation that

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It was Ribbentrop's view that England would not fight. Ribbentrop, however, had warned Hitler in his memorandum that the only decisive British leadership would fight to the bitter end, even to war, to preserve England's position of power in the world. England will fight, Ribbentrop emphasized in his report, if it feels stronger than Germany one day, because the British will not tolerate a powerful empire in their neighborhood.

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British provocations

The Austrian-Czech question

Chamberlain had sent Halifax to Germany "to sound out Hitler, not to make positive proposals." (Gilbert and Gott, The Appeasers. London 1963, p. 102£f.) This statement by the English historian is identical to Ribbentrop's assessment of Halifax's trip as a pure "exploratory and obfuscation maneuver." The promises that the Lord Privy Seal officially made to Hitler, for example, that the status quo in Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Danzig could be changed, were among the "indiscretions" permitted by Chamberlain, which, in addition to indiscretion, also means "non-binding assurances." Halifax did not speak in November 1937 as a peacemaker, but only as an appeaser – another meaning of "appeaser" – in order to gain time for British rearmament. Ribbentrop saw it exactly the same way at the time.

On the Austrian-Czech question, Ribbentrop writes in his "Conclusions" that "a clear English concession in our sense could have a cleansing effect on Europe." But Ribbentrop did not believe that this could be realized because Chamberlain, both in domestic and foreign policy, and above all through his ties to France, was stuck in a system that made major decisions infinitely difficult. After Hitler's initial efforts on February 12, 1938, to resolve the Austrian question in consultation with Austrian Chancellor Schuschnigg in a satisfactory manner, whereby Austria would have remained an independent state, only economically and in terms of alliances aligned with Germany, England felt "blindsided" (Henderson). Schuschnigg was persuaded to call a referendum, the provisions of which were unconstitutional – the voting age was set at 24. When Austria's union with Germany was nevertheless achieved peacefully on March 12, 1938, England, still unable to act, had to content itself with an official protest. At the same time, however, Chamberlain took the opportunity to stir up public opinion against Germany and accuse the Reich of plans for world conquest, similar to what

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Baldwin had done after the restoration of military sovereignty in the Rhineland. Henderson called the referendum abruptly demanded by Schuschnigg within three days "rash folly," but told Göring that although the Austrian action had been peaceful and without bloodshed, it could impair German understanding with England. (DBFP I, No. 48 and 49.)

Even during Ribbentrop's time as ambassador, British politicians repeatedly addressed the problem of the Sudeten Germans within Czechoslovakia. On March 20, 1938, however, Chamberlain still refused to give any guarantee to the Czechoslovak state, which now also had a common border with Germany in the south. But just four days later, on March 24, he declared in the House of Commons that England could be forced to fight for the status quo in Czechoslovakia even without "legal obligations," although he had officially declared through Halifax that this could be changed. (Feiling: The Life of Neville Chamberlain, p. 348.) Long before Germany considered using anything other than peaceful means, i.e., the instrument of self-determination provided for in the Treaty of Versailles, to free the Sudeten Germans from Czech oppression, the English public was frightened by a "war scare." Henderson reported on April 1, 1938, that after the "shock of Austria's annexation ... Hitler's next main goal would be to settle the Sudeten German question, if possible on the basis of the right of self-determination, but by force if this right were permanently denied." (DBFPI, No. 121.)

The core of British policy in 1938 was to persistently refuse the promised peaceful changes to the status quo in Czechoslovakia and to drive Hitler onto the offensive. During the talks between Daladier and Bonnet with Chamberlain and Halifax in London on April 28 and 29, all four statesmen agreed that England and France were not yet sufficiently prepared for war. Nevertheless, they discussed only one topic, namely the future war against Germany! It made Chamberlain's "blood boil to have to stand by and watch Germany regain a foothold in Central Europe." (DBFPI, No. 164.)

The British government felt uneasy in the crisis that was now beginning. Henderson received precise instructions on how to behave, as he had to take into account the "delicate nature of the undertaking."

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understand" that England had entered into negotiations with Czechoslovakia. The ambassador was instructed to adopt a different tone in Berlin than London had used with Prague. Here, the emphasis was on the weakness of the military situation in order to be able to withdraw at any time, but Berlin had to be warned against doing anything that could jeopardize peace. Hitler should not continue to advocate for the right of self-determination for the Sudeten Germans, the key issue in the Czechoslovak problem. Henderson was not allowed to tell Ribbentrop, either personally or confidentially, that Chamberlain favored a nationality state rather than a nation state there. The ambassador objected to such treatment of such a serious issue and stated in a letter to Halifax: "If I cannot speak to Ribbentrop personally and confidentially, it will be very difficult to convince the German government that we are not, as many here believe, merely playing for time until we are better prepared militarily for war." (DBFPI, No. 198 and 203.)

Henderson was concerned about the lack of understanding among his compatriots, who refused to comprehend that this was not a matter of Germany's attempt to seize the Sudeten Germans, but rather that "the Sudeten Germans want to break away from the Czechs by force." (DBFP VII, p. 623f£f.) Hitler welcomed the English intervention in Prague because he was "inclined to believe in our honesty," as Henderson ironically remarks, and because "Hitler himself also wanted a peaceful solution." (DBFP I, No. 234.) Ribbentrop had refused to restrain the leader of the Sudeten German Party, Henlein, politically because the Sudeten German question was an internal problem between the Czech government and Henlein, who "independently" represented the German population there. However, on May 12 and 14, 1938, Weizsäcker wrote two notes, which were not numbered and were not presented to Ribbentrop, in which he alluded in ambiguous terms to Henlein's alleged dependence

on the German government. (ADAP II, Doc. 155 and 159.) At the same time, Henlein held talks in London with Vansittart and Churchill. During these talks, he professed his support for "Nazi ideology," but vehemently denied Weizsäcker's insinuation that he was being "misused as a straw man for Germany's drive to the East." (DBFP I, p. 630ff.)

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May 21, 1938

' At the beginning of May 1938, the German conspiracy circle began to inform England about the alleged intentions of the Reich government against Czechoslovakia. They feared that

{ could lead to a solution to the Sudeten question that would be satisfactory to Germany.

H German question. During this period, the knight and landowner from Hinterpommern, Major Ewald von Kleist-Schmenzin, approached Jan Colvin, England's chief agent in Berlin. Kleist presented himself as

the "head of the monarchist alliance" in Germany, and Colvin remarked that "every single short sentence he uttered would have been enough to have him sentenced to death immediately." (Colvin: Vansit-

tart..., p. 210£.) Kleist-Schmenzin explained: "Hitler has his 'plans against France, Holland, Belgium, Denmark, Russia, against England and the New World'.

tart..., p. 210£.) Kleist-Schmenzin explained: "Hitler has his ' plans against France, Holland, Belgium, Denmark, Russia, : against England and the New World! He wants to annex Canada and Siberia.... Czechoslovakia is the next step." Kleist implored Colvin that England must say "no" to any settlement, even if it was only a "diplomatic solution" to the Czechoslovakian problem. For this too would be a serious blow to Hitler's "prestige in Germany." Colvin was informed by Kleist about the alleged weakness of the German army, which had neither reservists nor raw material reserves. The fortifications in the west were "only half finished" and Germany was "not yet capable of waging war." Colvin was not to publish anything about this, but was to let England know that the German "General Staff needed a lifeline, which could only be thrown to them by a decisive word from the British government." (Colvin, op. cit. ©.) The Prime Minister should revoke his November 1937 promise to seek a peaceful settlement of the Sudeten German question. Chamberlain, who had been informed of the alleged weakness of the German army, now wanted to test the real situation through a deliberate provocation.

On May 19, rumors spread about alleged German troop concentrations in southern Silesia and northern Austria. (DBFP I, No. 232.) The British Consulate General in Munich also reported that troops were being moved from Garmisch to the French border, and Prague also reported the news of German troop concentrations, which Benesch took as an opportunity to carry out partial mobilization. (DBFP I, No. 233.) None of these reports was true. Germany had not drafted a single additional soldier in May 1938 and had not

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thought of solving the Czechoslovakian problem militarily. But the British had spread the slander that Germany had assembled troops against Czechoslovakia. Based on this pure fabrication, the British government protested officially and, when nothing happened on the German side, spread the story through the press that Germany had only yielded to British pressure.

: On May 20, Henderson held a secret meeting with the German State Secretary (DBFP I, No. 240), about which Weizsäcker made only a brief three-line note. However, the Reuter news agency published a long summary of the meeting. Weizsäcker noted on May 20 that he had described the feigned German troop withdrawals to Henderson as "utter nonsense." (ADAP I, Doc. 171.) What the State Secretary actually said to the British ambassador will probably never be known for certain, but it is easy to imagine.

On May 21, 1938, at the height of the Czech crisis, Henderson had to visit Ribbentrop twice. He apologized for the indiscreet and detailed Reuter report on his conversation with Weizsäcker, because a press agreement had not been reached. (DBFP I, No. 249, 252 and 254). According to Henderson, who reported to London immediately after the crisis began that "there was no evidence of any anomalous military preparations against Prague, it was "unacceptable to the German government that the Czechoslovak-Soviet military alliance could create a springboard for Bolshevism in the heart of Central Europe. In the opinion of the Germans, it is this military alliance that has caused the Czech problem." (DBFB I, No. 237.)

Henderson asked Ribbentrop to urge the German government to remain patient despite the incident in Eger, "in which two Germans were shot from ambush," because it was better, after all, for a few people to lose their lives there, however terrible that might be, than for millions to fall. (ADAP U, Doc. 184.) The ambassador, who had previously reported to Halifax "that Hitler would immediately give the order to invade if a really serious incident occurred" (DBFP I, No. 240), now had to repeat Chamberlain's first warning to Ribbentrop on March 24 and explain:

"France would be forced to intervene in the event of a German attack, and England could also, without any treaty obligation,

the circumstances, or are forced by political necessity, to intervene." (ADAP I, Do. 186 and DBFP I, No. 250.)

Despite the serious incident in Eger, Germany remained patient, but in London Halifax reinforced the British threat to the German ambassador von Dirksen. A cable to the Foreign Office stated:

"that England would be drawn into the conflict if the French—under any circumstances—were to march against us, even in the event of serious Czech provocations." (ADAP II, Doc. 191.)

Chamberlain therefore took no offense at actual serious Czech provocations, but only at the chimera of German intentions to attack, which had been spread for the first time by British officials.

Chamberlain therefore took no offense at actual serious Czech provocations, but only at the chimera of German intentions to attack, which had been spread for the first time by English officials. Dirksen was instructed by Ribbentrop to ask Halifax whether he would correct his statements that England would

march against Germany in any case, otherwise they would be forced to make them public. Because of this self-evident instruction, Ribbentrop was portrayed to the English as an agitator, but the British government never issued a correction, nor did Henderson keep his promise to present the German foreign minister with the transcript of the conversation between Dirksen and Halifax. (ADAP I, Doc. 204 and 251.) Today, it is undoubtedly clear that the "agent reports of a feigned German march against Czechoslovakia were false." (Michael Freund, History of the Second World War in Documents, Volume I, Freiburg 1953, p. 36.) Above all, however, Henderson admitted in his memoirs that as early as May 23, 1938, everyone "except the most stubborn was convinced that the stories about German troop movements were in fact untrue." (Henderson, Failure of a Mission, London 1940, p. 137; author's emphasis). Among the most stubborn was Chamberlain, who wrote to his sister just one week later, on May 28, 1938:

I have no doubt 1. that the German government has made all the preparations for a coup, 2. that the Germans, after our warnings, considered the risks too great, 3. that they have become aware, in the general opinion, that they have lost their prestige through what has happened, and 4. that they are taking out their malice on us because they feel that we can checkmate them ... But the incident shows how completely unreliable and dishonorable the German government is ... One thing is quite clear to us, although we cannot say anything about it. "The Anschluss and the Anglo-Italian agreements together have dealt a nasty blow to the Rome-Berlin axis." (Feiling, Chamberlain p. 352 ellipsis in original.)

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It was not the German government but Chamberlain who was "malicious" after being asked by Kleist-Schmenzin to act as a lifeline for the German conspirators. In a completely "unreliable and dishonorable" manner, he accused Germany of aggressive intentions that he knew to be untrue. Moreover, he was electrified by the prospect of seriously weakening the Berlin-Rome axis and thereby diminishing Hitler's prestige among the German people. Chamberlain portrayed the German chancellor as belligerent, forced to accept political defeat by England's strong stance. This was exactly what Ribbentrop had warned Hitler about in his A 5522, that it was "a long-standing tradition in England" to blame the enemy for a future war, even if it meant resorting to obvious untruths. After May 21, the entire world press rejoiced over Hitler's alleged defeat, and the Czechs hoped that this "show of weakness" would force Hitler to withdraw his support for the Sudeten German Party. (DBFP I, p. 634.)

Henderson himself, who was disgusted by the intrigues of his "government," disavowed Chamberlain when he concluded his memoirs on the May crisis.

"Germany had never mobilized, nor had it ever had any intention of staging a 'coup'; it was only England that had cried 'wolf, wolf' for no reason." (Henderson, Failure ...p. 140.)

Since May 1938, Weizsäcker had established a "relationship of trust" with Henderson and began to actively play his "double role" (Weizsäcker, Memoirs, p. 165). Henderson, on the other hand, never betrayed his government, even though he was forced to constantly advocate for the outbreak of war desired by England and to draft useful documents to that end. Weizsäcker's dual role also included a letter he wrote, which Dr. Erich Kordt personally delivered to Ambassador von Dirksen in London, accompanied by "excellent interpretations" conveyed orally. This letter was intended to dispel any suspicions that "might" arise on Ribbentrop's part by Weizsäcker's use of the neutral "we" to refer to

the "view of the opposition to Hitler and Ribbentrop," while at other times using the same "we" to refer to the views of Hitler and Ribbentrop. (Rönnefarth, Die Sudetenkrise in der Internationalen Politik, Wiesbaden 1961, p. 320.) Rönnefarth sees in this letter from the German State Secretary that

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"First link in the chain" of actions by the conspirators, which began on the day when "Dr. Theo Kordt, having been given instructions on how to conduct himself in his new post, reported for duty to Weizsäcker." Dr. Theo Kordt, Erich Kordt's brother, had already been appointed embassy counselor in London in mid-April.

Hitler never forgot May 21. But Henderson was also to fight until the end of his term in Berlin against a repetition of the British threat of May 21, because it was based on false information.

Hitler never forgot this May 21. But Henderson was also to fight until the end of his term in Berlin against a repetition of the British threat of May 21, because it was based on false claims and was only the result of secret information from Kleist-Schmenzin, which Colvin had passed on to London in mid-May. Just one week later, on May 28, 1938, Hitler ordered the construction of the Siegfried Line because he had seen through the British intrigue to inflict a political defeat on him for no reason. From then on, he knew that he would have to defend himself against the West. Thus, the German conspirators, together with Chamberlain, had made Germany's western border impregnable. Without the Siegfried Wall, would Hitler have been able to demand the return of the Free City of Danzig a year later?

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Defamation as state policy

Goerdeler advises Vansittart

Immediately after Hitler ordered the construction of the Siegfried Line, Goerdeler informed British statesmen about the allegedly catastrophic mood in Germany. Vansittart made the following note about this on June 1, 1938:

"The threat of war, which reached its peak around May 25 (sic! May 21), when German troops were mobilized to invade Czechoslovakia, has now entered a latent stage. This is largely due to the energetic intervention of the British government. However, the danger is by no means completely averted. Influential figures in the Nazi party... are pushing for swift action against Czechoslovakia. They claim that the annexation of Austria would lose its real significance without the occupation of Czechoslovakia. Austria alone is of little value; it is only valuable as a link to the rest of the Danube region. The agitators in the Nazi party claim to have reports showing that Great Britain and France are only bluffing and would not seriously help Czechoslovakia. This applies mainly to the British cabinet.

As for the Sudeten Germans, it must be borne in mind that Henlein has now fallen out of favor with Hitler, who considers him a weakling and only needs him to calm opinion abroad. He is a man of great integrity and plays with his cards on the table. Vansittart notes in parentheses: "I am pleased to find this confirmation of my own view." In Germany, he says, the slogan is that we need a rooster, but not a

cockerel.

To understand the whole situation, one must take into account the fact that Hitler suffered a considerable loss of prestige by backing down on May 2, not only abroad, but this time in Germany itself ... This is extremely important. Competent observers believe that the prestige of the German Nazi regime, after its successful operations against Austria, has now been largely lost as a result of the humiliation of May 21. The following news came from a Dresden source: The leading Saxon Nazi circles are very impressed by the Czech preparations for a serious defense. The Czech mobilization came completely unexpected and, together with the diplomatic interventions in Berlin—England's threats—had an immediate effect. But everyone who

believes that the Nazi plan has been abandoned will one day be in for a surprise. The following from Plauen, near the border: .... The border guards have been mobilized, troops from outside are marching in. Nazi storm troops and the Black Guard are marching around everywhere in full gear, and a 'Sudeten German Legion' is being kept on constant alert near Chemnitz. Since that critical Sunday—May 21—the alert in our area has not let up. All kinds of rumors are circulating, and everyone is agitated about preparations for an attack on the Czechs. The news that the Czech reserves have been called up astonishes everyone... Since last Sunday, the Nazis seem to feel that the 'Führer' has not defeated his enemy.

The following from Munich and from a new source: After the tension of last week, the nervousness has now subsided. When the news spread on Sunday afternoon that the Czechs had mobilized and that there would be no march into Czechoslovakia, everyone seemed physically relieved.... On Sunday afternoon, people were still talking only about the British ambassador's visit to Ribbentrop and the Czech mobilization. Everyone assumed that the ambassador had spoken very openly.

Respect for England has grown enormously since Sunday. The more the Nazis rant about 'perfidious Albion', the more the people are convinced that England has prevented war this time – that is all that matters." (Recorded by Vansittart on June 1, 1938, Secret FO 371/21723. Signed Vansittart. Emphasis added by the author.)

The dangerous day of May 21, 1938, was intended to glorify Chamberlain for preventing a war that Germany had no intention of waging. Goerdeler's assessment of the mood reinforced the British belief that their move had influenced the German people in their favor.

While Henderson repeatedly warned of a repeat of "May 21" until the outbreak of war, because it was based on fabricated aggressive intentions on the part of Germany, this date became a day of celebration for the conspirators. May 2 is mentioned three times in Goerdeler's report, flattering the British by saying that their "energetic intervention" alone had deterred Hitler. Respect for England had "increased enormously" since May 21, and the German people were now convinced that Chamberlain had prevented war, and that was the only thing that "mattered." The circle around Goerdeler in England was called the "more reasonable" Germans, which also included Dr. Schacht. Ashton-Gwatkin, who was later assigned to the Runciman Mission in Prague, wrote at the time about the planned economic talks with Germany: "We should not lift the currency controls,

before a political change took place" (FO 371/21663). For people were waiting for the coup in Berlin.

Kordt intervenes

After returning from Germany, Vernon Bartlett of News Chronicle wrote a letter to Sir Orme Sargent, who had asked him to put his "impressions of his last visit to Berlin" on paper. Bartlett begins by referring to the National Socialists as "gangsters" whose influence has become much stronger than before. He sent the report of a "young Berlin diplomat," to which Sargent added a note on the cover: "Mr. Bartlett's German friend is Mr. Kordt, formerly First Secretary at the German Embassy in London and now one of Mr. von Ribbentrop's private secretaries." Bartlett reported that Kordt did not want to give his name because he often disagreed with the Foreign Minister. However, he revealed that the Germans were more concerned about British financial interests in Southeast Europe than they had been about the "British intervention of May 21." Kordt believed that British financial support for Romania, Greece, and Yugoslavia would be more favorable for the British and "much cheaper than the current policy of rearmament." Germany should not be encouraged to believe that it could do whatever it wanted in "southeastern Europe." This could have the same effect on the younger generation as the discrimination of the Treaty of Versailles and would sooner or later lead to war. As Bartlett writes, Kordt reported the following verbatim:

"The policy of Great Britain should be 1. to emphasize the enormous military strength and financial power of the British Empire at every possible opportunity, and 2. to examine every problem strictly on its merits. When asked what he meant by this last statement, my German friend said that one must never forget that the German people have been afflicted by an almost incomprehensible complex since their defeat, and that one should therefore treat German arguments with the most benevolent interpretation possible. But if the British government finds that the German rulers are behaving very wrongly, they should 'kick them and kick them very hard'.

Only in this way, in the opinion of this and other senior Germans with whom I have discussed the situation, would it be possible to mitigate the influence on Mr. Hitler exerted by the 'gangsters' — yes-men and extremists — ...." (FO 371/21657, C 7461.) Vernon Bartlett, June 22, 1938

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These are Dr. Erich Kordt's recommendations to the British on how to conduct their policy against Germany. Kordt was head of the ministerial office in the Foreign Office at the time and abused his position of trust with Ribbentrop to advise the British to become economically involved in the southeast, because that would be even more disadvantageous for the Germans than the "May 21." They should emphasize their enormous military and financial power, examine every new problem closely for its negative impact on the Germans, and sharply oppose the allegedly unlawful behavior of the Reich government. Sargent noted on these instructions from Kordt that the economic encirclement of Germany would not be a dangerous policy, but also not very successful or far-reaching, because it would have to remain "within the narrow limits of England's economic and financial orthodoxy." We know from Colvin's book, Chamberlain's Cabinet, that England's wealth had to be preserved for the postwar period in order to maintain Britain's position as a world power. Vansittart writes about Kordt's proposals:

"For God's sake, let us not assume that Germany is invincible in Romania. Romania is the key country and probably Germany's next target. It may already be ahead of Czechoslovakia, and once Germany controls the Romanian oil it obviously needs, it will consider itself invulnerable for the next war. And

we will have the next war! This is of the utmost importance, so we must concentrate on it. Should a different opinion prevail, I must be given every opportunity to present my own view again and again, for it is well-founded." (FO 371/21657, C 7461, June 22, 1938.)

This Bartlett-Kordt document was signed by Roberts, Cadogan, and Halifax and annotated in the margins. Like Bartlett, Jan Colvin also wrote for the News Chronicle, whose sharply anti-German comments and biased correspondent reports were based on Kordt's communications.

The Runciman Mission: "An excellent move" In the summer months of 1938, the issue at stake was the right to self-determination for the Sudeten Germans, for whom Hitler later called elections in the

the areas concerned, so that the desire of the population could be realized.

the areas concerned, so that the desire of the population

their future could be determined without any problems. Henderson repeatedly reported to London that Hitler wanted nothing more than "to revise Versailles through negotiations." (DBFP I, No. 356, 367, and 378.) An article also appeared in The Times on June 3, 1938, expressing the view that "the Sudeten Germans have an unquestionable right to correct an injustice such as that created by the Treaty of Versailles." (Freund I, Doc. 24.) This most authoritative English newspaper understood that the Czech government was reluctant to agree to a plebiscite that would probably result in a demand for unification with the Reich and thus entail the loss of the Sudeten region for the Czech Republic. In the end, however, Beneš could still be the winner, as he would then have a "more homogeneous and satisfied people." While the Beneš-Henlein negotiations were still underway, following the Czech partial mobilization, three years of military service in Czechoslovakia was announced. Henderson rejected the idea that he should defend this Czech measure to Ribbentrop, because it would seriously damage "Britain's reputation for sincerity," since the Chamberlain government had itself proposed a peaceful solution to the Sudeten German problem.

The false reports of May 21 had triggered a European "crisis." But Chamberlain did not yet dare to take a tougher stance. On the one hand, the British armament situation forced him to proceed cautiously, and on the other hand, the German conspiratorial circles had yet to prove that they played a significant, even dominant role in British political calculations. The prime minister therefore continued his policy of concealment. During these weeks and months, he maneuvered and played tactical games. To pretend to the world that London was striving for a British-German pacification, Chamberlain sent Lord Runciman to Prague to find a compromise solution between Benesch and Henlein.

The German conspirators and anti-government circles reacted positively to this British move. This is clear from a report by Prof. Ernst Jäckh, a native German who became a naturalized English citizen in 1938, to Sargent of the Foreign Office. In a lengthy conversation with Jäckh, the German ambassador in Paris, Count Welczeck, explained:

"The Runciman mission is an excellent move in the British game... The leaders of the National Socialist Party are in favor of war."

very impressed, especially since Göring joined. He fears that his four-year plan will not be feasible." (FO 371/21734/C 8996. Strictly confidential, August 20, 1938.) Unlike Jäckh, Prince Max von Hohenlohe believed that Göring and Ribbentrop were "committed to a peaceful solution." (FO 371/21731/C 8699, memorandum from Ashton-Gwatkin, August 15, 1938.)

The day after the announcement of the Runciman mission on July 27, 1938, Halifax expressed his regret in a personal letter to Ribbentrop about the premature British press reports on the Runciman mission before the German government had been informed. At the same time, he stated how pleased he was "that the German press had not commented on Lord Runciman's appointment without goodwill." (ADAP IL, Doc. 323.) The Reich government declined to comment on Runciman's appointment because it had been made without Germany's knowledge and must therefore be regarded as a "purely British mission." (ADAP II, Doc. 318.) The original letter from Halifax dated July 28 bears Ribbentrop's note "For translation! File F (Führer) 30. 7." This letter was therefore brought to Hitler's attention. But Henderson had already asked Weizsäcker on July 29—one day after Halifax's letter was sent—whether it would not be possible to "inform the Führer of the real facts," because the comments in the German press were quite different from Hitler's attitude, "as described by Captain Wiedemann." (ADAP II, Doc. 327.) This clumsy inquiry was intended to insinuate that Ribbentrop was not informing Hitler of everything important, just as Neurath had previously been accused of doing!

Wiedemann: Messenger of the conspirators

Retired Captain Wiedemann, to whose visit to London Henderson alluded, was known to have been Hitler's superior during the World War and one of his personal aides since 1935. Wiedemann was received by Halifax on July 18, 1938, at his private residence on Eton Square with Chamberlain's permission and claimed to have come to London "with Hitler's knowledge" but "without Ribbentrop's knowledge." He wanted to find out whether a "highly placed German personality could come here as soon as possible to hold comprehensive talks on Anglo-German relations." (DBFP I, No. 510.) This Halifax

According to the record, Wiedemann had said that Field Marshal Göring was very taken with this idea, because Hitler wanted good relations with England. Halifax rejected Göring's offer to visit London because the Sudeten German problem had not yet been resolved. Furthermore, it would be better if further talks were held between Ribbentrop and Henderson. Wiedemann reacted "extremely vehemently" to this remark and emphasized that Ribbentrop should not be involved in the matter until it was absolutely unavoidable, adding "in confidence" that Ribbentrop's position with Hitler was no longer as important as it had been in the past.

Wiedemann's visit to Halifax had been arranged without Hitler's prior knowledge by a native Austrian, the divorced Princess Stephanie von Hohenlohe. Hitler had asked Wiedemann before his departure how he had "come by this invitation." (ADAP VI, p. 545.) Hitler considered a visit by Göring to London pointless as long as the attitude of the English press did not change. On "May 21," the matter had been presented as if "Germany had merely yielded to English pressure," even though he had personally told Ambassador Henderson twice that no German soldiers had been mobilized. (ADAP VI, p. 543.) The fact that Ribbentrop had been informed of Wiedemann's visit

to England, because the adjutant had traveled to London without instructions or orders from Hitler. At the same time as this trip, Wiedemann let "both the English and the Americans know that Hitler was

internally very much toying with the idea of war." He told the then Reich Court Councilor von Dohnany about the Chancellor:

"The only thing that can help against this man is a revolver! But who should do it? I am in a position of trust here." (Wiedemann, Der Mann, der Feldherr werden wollte [The Man Who Wanted to Be a Commander], Velbert 1964, p. 171.)

The political turmoil that Wiedemann, who did not want to shoot because of his "position of trust," caused in London is evident from the many secret reports on this subject available in the Foreign Office. On June 30, 1938, Vansittart received a report on the situation in Germany from a "man in Hitler's immediate circle." This man was Fritz Wiedemann, identified on the document by Vansittart himself with the handwritten initials "FW." Wiedemann's report was sent to Halifax with the request that it be presented to Chamberlain. The document confirms that the "PM" – the Prime Minister – read it on July 11, 1938. Wiedemann then stated:

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"The blow dealt to Hitler on May 21 destroyed his plans and caused complete confusion and a lack of leadership in almost all departments of the German government. Hitler is under no illusions and realizes that his defeat on May 21 destroyed his personal authority and prestige not only among the entire German people, but also among his closest colleagues. He is therefore now mainly filled with a wild desire for revenge. Because of his loss of prestige, he showers his closest associates either with brutal outbursts of rage or with a sphinx-like silence regarding his plans and intentions. He no longer invites his most trusted advisors to informal meetings from time to time to discuss the continuation of political developments, as he did in the past. He now summons them individually to hear their views on various issues and then dismisses them more or less politely without responding to their opinions or revealing his own reaction. The result is a feeling of uncertainty in all departments. His colleagues live in fear of being punished with death for contradicting him in his extremely irritable state. Another consequence is that people like Göring, Himmler, and Goebbels do not know what the Führer wants and what they should do. This results in various strange and uncoordinated actions, with one or the other hoping to win the favor of the much-feared tyrant. Typical of the state of affairs was the initiative taken by Goebbels, who, in his capacity as Gauleiter of Berlin, recently issued orders to the party organization in his Gau that the mistreatment of Jews should be resumed immediately because Hitler had recently remarked in a conversation that the Jews seemed to be flourishing again.

At the same time, Göring believes he is fulfilling Hitler's wish when he tells his many visitors at every opportunity that it is Germany's mission to wage a heroic war as soon as possible.

The entire leadership of German state affairs and foreign policy is not pursuing a clear line at the moment because Hitler is shrouding himself in grim silence and, with few exceptions, is not issuing any orders or instructions.

While the other leaders are restless and always keeping an eye on the Führer, they are taking contradictory and uncoordinated personal actions. For example, new directives are issued to the press every day, often in direct contradiction to what was ordered the day before. This is particularly the case in connection with Czechoslovakia and Spain, because Goebbels had heard something, sometimes only second-hand, about a harsh remark made by Hitler in a conversation. Hess's speech in Stettin falls into the same category. It was not, as the foreign press portrayed it, written by Hitler himself, let alone approved or read by him beforehand.

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All this points to fearful groping and efforts to guess the real will of the sinister leader and to appease him before he vents his anger in a particular direction. Under these circumstances, a number of highly placed observers believe that any political setback for the Nazi system and for the Führer himself—as long as it does not affect the German people—would have the greatest influence and could accelerate the crisis that has seemed inevitable since May 21. To give an example: the order to dissolve all Nazi organizations in Switzerland—the possibility of which has been published from time to time in the Swiss press—would be another serious blow to the already shaken authority of the Führer and a real threat to the regime. In the field of foreign policy, Ribbentrop and his officials are trying to find a way out of the rather hopeless situation by once again approaching Soviet Russia. In those circles, it is noted (with due respect for Hitler's unpredictable whims, of course) that today's Russian Bolshevism, which has always been branded by the Nazi party as a Jewish institution, is now increasingly turning into a form of fascism of the Russian type. This is said to be the result of Stalin's extensive dismissals of Jewish officials, which would soon remove any political or philosophical obstacles to the resumption of good relations with Russia. Hitler himself has not yet decided on a policy of rapprochement with the Soviet government. At the moment, he likes to play the role of the great silent sphinx. At least he recently received the new Soviet ambassador in a lengthy audience with unusual courtesy: the press was forbidden to report on this reception under threat of severe punishment. The new ambassador has meanwhile established close contact with various branches of the Nazi party. And in the Reich Ministry of Economics, there is great hope that gasoline and grain can be imported from Russia to Berlin via Romania and the German-Romanian Petroleum Company.

Since May 21, Hitler has given only one concrete order, and that was on June 12 in a conversation with General Keitel, the commander-in-chief of the army. The latter informed Hitler that the armament program would fall hopelessly behind schedule unless the entire iron and steel capacity of German industry was allocated solely to the fulfillment of this program, which of course also includes the Four-Year Plan. All other buildings or construction projects of a non-military nature would have to be postponed. Hitler agreed to this plan and gave the corresponding order: Therefore, for example, the plan for all new motorways has been postponed, with the exception of those that are of direct strategic importance for the actions against Czechoslovakia and France. This also means the postponement of the special program for party buildings. Hitler has issued the above provisions in his own hand.

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As Minister of War, he included an order to remedy the shortcomings that had become so apparent during the invasion of Austria, i.e., the poor condition of locomotives, trucks, sidings, and railroad tracks, and the very serious shortage of heavy transport vehicles. These deficiencies must be remedied by October 1, 1938, including the delivery of heavy transport vehicles worth 600 million Reichsmarks.

Furthermore, it has been ordered that the construction of the fortifications on Germany's western border – the Westwall – be completed by November 1, 1938, with the help of workers brought in from other areas. In order to carry out this work, new laws have been introduced whereby all Germans, regardless of gender or age, can be called upon by the state to perform any kind of work. As a result, a large number of engineers and construction workers have been called away from their jobs and sent to the western fortifications. In addition, a new "Westgau" has been established for labor service, and 16,000

workers have been sent there. The additional districts "O" and "R" have also been newly established, but their purpose is unknown at this time. The most remarkable aspect of Hitler's latest decree is the words he uses to justify these drastic orders: "So that I will not be prevented a second time from carrying out my decision at a decisive political moment, namely by the poor condition of the German army and the fighting troops." (FO 371/21708, July 8, 1938.)

Just as Goerdeler had informed Vansittart on June 1, 1938, of England's great success on May 21, which had resulted in a "retreat" and "humiliation" , Wiedemann again informed the British Foreign Minister's chief advisor about the allegedly catastrophic effect that the British stance of May 2 had had on the German people. Hitler is portrayed as a broken man who recognizes his defeat and no longer gives orders. Contradicting this, however, Wiedemann informs the British of a whole series of orders issued by Hitler, not least that the construction of the Westwall was to be completed by November 1, 1938, that the deficiencies in the army were to be remedied by October 1, that two new districts had been established, and that men and women of all ages could be conscripted to work on the Westwall.

Wiedemann paints a completely false picture of the situation in Germany to the British with the intention of inciting them to resistance. He refers to Russia, which Germany is said to be moving closer to, claims that only the motorways against France and Czechoslovakia are being completed, and quotes Hitler's alleged words that he will not allow himself to be defeated again by poor access.

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wanted to prevent his army from making necessary decisions. Wiedemann was friends with Canaris, Oster, and Albrecht Haushofer and, like the admiral, had access to the chancellor at any time. He refused to confront Hitler with a revolver, but he encouraged his friends to do so. After the obscure role he had played in England, Hitler no longer wanted him around. He had to be taken over by the Foreign Office and was transferred to San Francisco as consul general. In London, Ambassador von Dirksen said he was "very satisfied" with Wiedemann's visit and that Ribbentrop had "not been informed." Wiedemann's statements to Halifax and his report to Vansittart are another link in the chain of treason and betrayal of state secrets by the German conspirators, which cost the lives of hundreds of thousands of soldiers and civilians.

Wiedemann's advice: eliminate Ribbentrop

Still under the influence of Wiedemann's action, officials in the Foreign Office claimed that Ribbentrop would not show Hitler the aforementioned Halifax letter of July 28 "under any circumstances. This would be a great danger." (FO 371/21729 of August 3, 1938.) Together with Vansittart, Sargent considered whether Henderson should forward a copy of this letter to Neurath, and in the meantime Chamberlain toyed with the idea of sending a "personal message" to the German Reich Chancellor. Sargent laconically stated that Ribbentrop could not object to this step. "Should such a message really become necessary, we would have to bypass Mr. von Ribbentrop, whom we assume belongs to the war party and is constantly fighting against our efforts to achieve a peaceful settlement of the Czechoslovak problem." The original plan was to use Wiedemann as an intermediary for this Chamberlain message. However, this idea was abandoned. It was decided that the Prime Minister should not approach Hitler, but rather Ambassador von Dirksen.

On August 3, Chamberlain wrote "privately and personally" to Ambassador von Dirksen, who was

spending his vacation in Germany. This step by the British Prime Minister was extremely unusual, especially since he had only ten days left before the deadline for the British ultimatum.

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days earlier and referred to the British warning of March 24, 1938. Chamberlain also expressed his "satisfaction" with the information conveyed by Wiedemann. But the real meaning of his letter was the instruction given to the German ambassador: Dirksen was to try during his vacation to "speak to Hitler and ask him to attach full importance to the contents of the personal letter which Lord Halifax had recently sent to Mr. von Ribbentrop regarding Lord Runciman's mission." (ADAP II, Doc. 333.) With this, the British head of government officially interfered in internal German affairs, a completely new procedure that contradicted all diplomatic conventions.

The chargé d'affaires Theo Kordt in London was instructed by Ribbentrop to express the German government's astonishment to the British government because it considered Chamberlain's private letter inadmissible, as it "contained, in a sense, the insinuation that the information provided to our head of state by the Reich Foreign Minister was insufficient." (ADAP II, Doc. 356.) Chamberlain's malice was now joined by impudence and arrogance. How could the Prime Minister bring himself to repeat a request that Henderson had already made to Weizsäcker? Under the protection of the German conspirators, he must have believed that he could arouse Hitler's distrust of Ribbentrop in order to get rid of this advisor who was a nuisance to England.

After Wiedemann, as emissary, had explained the conspirators' strategy to the relevant British leadership circles, London was again besieged and pressured. On August 4, Ashton-Gwatkin sent his colleague in the Foreign Office, Sir Orme Sargent, a report from Dr. Schairer, who was in close contact with many representatives of German industry, including Dr. Schacht, and acted as Goerdeler's liaison in London. He called August and September a "critical period," which was confirmed by Van Sittart, who noted in his own marginalia that he "trusted" Goerdeler and Schairer but "did not trust" Wiedemann. Sargent commented on this Schairer report by saying that the "radicals and warmongers, led by Himmler and supported by Ribbentrop, were opposed to the moderates." These moderates—the conspirators—bolstered by industrialists and the army, were now trying to "win over Göring to their side, as well as Neurath as Ribbentrop's rival." To strengthen their own position, the "moderates" were keen to prove that they would succeed in reaching an agreement between

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between Germany and England. To this end, they "used Wiedemann." (FO 371/21664, August 1, 1938.)

As always, Ribbentrop's image is distorted here, as if he had wanted the war. Those who wanted the war were the conspirators, those Germans who needed the outbreak of war to get rid of Hitler. Schairer also demanded an "external crisis," i.e., military action by our enemies against Germany, in order to trigger the "internal crisis" in the first place. A few days before the Schairer report, the Daily Mail and the Daily Express published a big story that Wiedemann wanted to come to London again. Vansittart responded very sharply in a letter to Halifax, arguing that this second visit "must irritate Ribbentrop, because Captain Wiedemann is plotting against him." He feared that this would "plunge us into the disputes between the two existing German cliques at a moment when it is necessary to treat the German

government not only with determination but also correctly." Halifax's handwritten marginal note on this reads that it would be difficult to "refuse" Wiedemann's visit if he wanted to come to London. (FO 371/21781, July 28, 1938, C 7938.)

The main purpose of all these treacherous reports was, first, to convince England of the allegedly catastrophic internal situation in Germany, so that Hitler could be easily overthrown, and second, to attribute as many warmongering intentions as possible to the German government in order to exploit them for British propaganda.

On August 3, Henderson had spoken with Weizsäcker, who told him that Ribbentrop was supposed to stay away from Berlin for some time on doctor's orders. Henderson wrote to Halifax about this:

"I wish it were more than just a doctor's advice, for I seriously doubt that anything good can come of Ribbentrop as foreign minister. One has the feeling of playing a role in one of the old Greek tragedies, constantly observing the events and the inexorable march forward that leads to the final and inevitable tragic end. I regret being so pessimistic, but it is difficult to avoid it in Berlin. And as for Ribbentrop, I cannot help comparing him to the Austrian Foreign Minister Berchtold, who was also like that and probably the person most responsible for August 1914.

I pray that the Prime Minister will keep Britain out of it when the tragedy comes. I cannot bear the thought of losing a single British life, either for the Sudetenland or for

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the Czechs ... Fortunately, Hitler is his own foreign minister. Schacht said recently: 'No one' advises him... Nevertheless, I see no possible solution unless Runciman recommends genuine home rule for the Sudetenland." (FO 800/269, August 3, 1938.)

Ribbentrop's comparison with Count Berchtold, who is said to have been the main culprit in the outbreak of the First World War, was a very effective flash of inspiration on Henderson's part, which he repeats in his memoirs. The indictment in Nuremberg took up this comparison, as Henderson's propaganda book was one of the so-called key documents. (J. v. Ribbentrop: Between London and Moscow. op. cit., p. 288.)

Wiedemann – Conspirator and Consul General in the USA

The conspirators had not only established their bases in European capitals. They also had a distribution center in the United States that relayed their secret information to the White House and the State Department.

On June 29, Ashton-Gwatkin reported on a conversation he had had in New York with Dr. Gotthilf Bronisch. Bronisch was Goerdeler's liaison in the United States, just as Schairer was in London. He was in contact with Messersmith from the State Department. The most important information Bronisch had shared was:

"The opposition of the German army to the Nazis had neither been eliminated nor collapsed. Last February, it had not yet been ready. The army officers were too 'honest and sincere'; they had not

concealed their feelings and intentions. In the future, they would organize secretly so as to be ready next time... The Nazi movement was based solely on bluff and had no real strength. At the slightest sign of determined opposition, it would collapse... Foreign policy events could accelerate this process, i.e., a resolute stance by Great Britain and France could stop further aggression or even trigger obvious shocks to the economic situation... Any concession to Hitler or offers of negotiation from England and France would strengthen his position and make the fight against him more difficult. Bronisch hopes with all his heart that the British government will at least hold back, continue to arm itself strongly, and not run after Hitler with negotiations.... Bronisch hopes to find a group of Germans and people in America who believe in the

interested in German affairs in order to denigrate the Nazi system and the Nazi government. These people will then exert their influence on German statesmen visiting America... ." (FO 371/21663, C 6518.)

Roberts made detailed comments on this document. Jebb, Sargent, Cadogan, and Vansittart also signed it.

While Bronisch was on the east coast of New York in direct contact with American government circles, Wiedemann put out feelers on the west coast. However, before he left for North America, British circles hoped to enlist his services once again. On September 10, Halifax received a handwritten letter from Lord Elibank suggesting that Captain Wiedemann be used to make it clear to Hitler how much the entire English people "stood behind His Majesty's Government." He said he had spoken to Princess Hohenlohe in Salzburg the previous day and explained the situation to her. She regretted that "there was a party in Germany working against peace and that there was only one way to impress Hitler, and that was a definitive statement from our government about our views and intentions in the event that France was forced into war. Sir John Simons' Lanark speech had not been enough." (FO 800/314, September 18, 1938.)

After the princess's death, her son Franz Hohenlohe contradicted an article in the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung of July 29, 1972, which claimed that Wiedemann and the princess had tried to persuade England to give in. In his "correction" of December 11, 1972, he states: "Quite the contrary!" He thus confirmed what was evident from the British documents.

When Wiedemann took up his post in San Francisco in January 1939, Creswell of the Foreign Office claimed that Wiedemann's departure from Berlin "must be regarded as a setback for Anglo-German relations... For the name of Captain Wiedemann is identified on the German side with the Anglo-German appeasement policy which is being pursued so vigorously by the British side through the present government." (FO 371/22980, C 1028/1618, undated.) No wonder this file bears the note: "Used for British radio on January 21, 1939."

In America, Wiedemann continued his treacherous game until the outbreak of war. There is an FBI report on this, which refers to the unpublished Morgenthau "diaries" entitled "Der

Case of Sir William: Wiseman, Stefanie von Hohenlohe-Waldenburg, and Captain Fritz Wiedemann." Wiseman was a high-ranking British intelligence official. He claims that Wiedemann made no secret of

the fact that he "rejected" the existing German government. He had sought the interview with Wiseman in order to find out "how drastically England would treat the Germans in the event of defeat." That was on October 7, 1940. Wiseman initially only managed to speak to Princess Hohenlohe, who conveyed Wiedemann's suggestion that she should "personally deliver an English peace proposal to Hitler and Ribbentrop in Berlin." The princess claimed that "Hitler liked her and would be pleased to see her. Hitler must ally himself with Great Britain, and such an alliance would bring lasting peace. She would ridicule Mussolini as a 'clown' to Hitler and emphasize the great power of the United States." Wiseman explained: "The president has four years left to lead the United States into war, and he seems determined to do so." Finally, on November 27, 1940, Wiseman spoke with Wiedemann for over five hours. The consul general agreed that the report on this conversation should be sent directly to Halifax, bypassing the British ambassador Lothian in Washington. The tenor of the report shows that Wiseman no longer spoke of an offer of peace to Hitler, as he had done in the past, but only of his "elimination." Wiedemann agreed and stated "that a lasting peace could only be concluded with a strong German party, perhaps a monarchy, and that the current Hitler regime must be destroyed." The Crown Prince was also mentioned, as was Himmler, "who was also a monarchist and might offer good support." Finally, Princess Hohenlohe declared "that Hitler must be eliminated." Wiedemann also agreed. These pompous conversations resulted in Princess Hohenlohe being expelled from the United States. On December 20, 1940, Wiedemann told the American press that the princess was no longer in the United States. In reality, however, she was still living in California. In America, it was believed that Princess Hohenlohe was being protected by both the British and the Germans, but only by the German conspirators, of course. Finally, in March 1941, Roosevelt demanded that Princess Hohenlohe be expelled from the country. He said he was tired of hearing that she was "deportable" but not deported.

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because she had Hungarian citizenship. Princess Hohenlohe was considered an active German agent, comparable to Mata Hari. (Morgenthau Diaries, FDR Library, Hyde Park, New York.)

Cavalry Captain von Koerber reports to the British military attaché

1938 became the year of the conspirators. Since May 21, their visits to London and the British Embassy in Berlin had become more frequent. Here, on August 6, retired cavalry captain von Koerber told British military attaché Mason-MacFarlane that he was "fanatically anti-Hitler," that the opposition had "grown to an incredible extent," and that war could only be avoided by overthrowing the Hitler regime from within. He warned of a Franco victory that would sound the death knell for England and France "if England did not succeed in buying out Italy." He went on to declare that the German army was currently "completely unfit" for war and that, like the German people, it must immediately be "infiltrated with English counter-propaganda." (DBFP II, No. 595.) Henderson had this report from a German traitor brought to London personally by Mason-Macfarlane in order to "discuss the German military situation in the War Office in person," as described by Koerber. The English military attaché also took with him a private letter from Henderson to Halifax dated August 8, in which the ambassador, contradicting the German conspirators, stated that he believed "that Hitler desires a peaceful solution but cannot wait indefinitely." (DBFP II, No. 594.) The Henderson report that Halifax received on the Koerber meeting stated that the German "war party hoped for a blitzkrieg" lasting no more than three months if England remained neutral. Koerber emphasized that everything depended on the British attitude toward defeating the German "war party" and that Germany must therefore enter the war so that it would not last "only three months, but three years." (FO 371/21730, August 4, 1938.)

The British military attaché Mason-MacFarlane was governor of Gibraltar during the Second World War and is linked in Irving's book "Mord aus Staatsräson?" (London 1969) to the death of the Polish exile Prime Minister Sikorski in a plane crash. When Mason-MacFarlane died in 1970, he was honored by

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Leo Geyr von Schweppenburg published an obituary in which he praised the intention of the former British military attaché in Berlin to shoot Hitler. Before the war, Geyr was a German military attaché in London. (Kölnische Rundschau, February 22, 1970.)

On August 21, 1938, Koerber was again at Mason-MacFarlane and provided detailed information about Hitler's alleged general mobilization against Czechoslovakia, which had already begun. This report was also to be forwarded to the British War Office. It referred not only to Hitler's diplomatic defeat of May 21, which he could not survive, but also to a "war that would break out as a result of intervention by England and France to bring about the downfall of the regime." It was therefore irrelevant whether Hitler would postpone his demand for the Sudeten Germans or try to enforce it by force. In either case, he was to be overthrown. Koerber's report shows how little the conspirators were concerned that the Czech mobilization of May 21 had not been reversed. But he and his friends were "shocked" that the German military countermeasures "were accepted so calmly abroad." (DBFP I, No. 595.)

After Halifax received Koerber's secret information in August 1938 about the allegedly widespread anti-Hitler sentiment in Germany, he sent Mason-MacFarlane back to Berlin with important instructions for Henderson, and the British government again behaved very strangely: The ambassador was to have a "memorandum addressed to himself" delivered directly to Hitler through the Reich Chancellery, not through Ribbentrop. He was to make himself available to the Chancellor in order to "discuss the contents of the memorandum with him personally." In it, Halifax referred to Wiedemann's alleged German-English proposals for understanding, which were "not in harmony with the completion of the Westwall and the German military measures and threatened the peace of Europe." (DBFP H, No. 608.) We know that Hitler gave the order to build the Siegfried Line on May 28, one week after May 2, the day on which Chamberlain stated in writing that the Germans had wanted to invade Czechoslovakia and had only been prevented from doing so by England's firm stance. This false report was intended to damage Hitler's reputation in Germany. Chamberlain

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He did not achieve this, but he convinced Hitler that England was seeking a military confrontation with Germany and had included this in its political considerations. Thus, the Siegfried Line owes its existence to the British lie of May 2 that Hitler had concentrated German troops to invade Czechoslovakia. Henderson was very concerned that Halifax was allowing himself to be guided by the secret treasonous communications from Wiedemann and Koerber. He warned in the strongest terms that this "source of information" must be kept secret from the press and also from the French, because the slightest indiscretion in this regard would destroy "the slightest hope of success." (DBFP II, No. 604, note 2). By this, Henderson meant the elimination of Hitler.

Even before Reich Minister Dr. Lammers, head of the Reich Chancellery, was able to bring the British memorandum, which had been handed over in an incorrect manner, to Hitler's attention, its contents had already been made public by a London Havas report from the Luxembourg radio station. Lammers

wrote to Ribbentrop, who had been bypassed at the request of London and Wiedemann, that Hitler did not intend to take any action. (ADAPII, Doc. 354 and 364.) Henderson expressed his deepest regret to Halifax about this unfortunate indiscretion at this critical moment. (DBFP II, No. 621.) He again urged Halifax "whatever happens, not to admit publicly that he ever made this demarche. For it may be of the utmost importance in the future to prove that we are capable of keeping a secret." (DBFP I, No. 638, note 2.)

On August 15, 1938, Henderson complained again in a letter to Sargent about the memorandum addressed to him, which he had been forced to hand over directly to Hitler, bypassing Ribbentrop:

"Your instruction to bypass Ribbentrop by means of the memorandum to Hitler on German military measures has caused me considerable embarrassment. It put me in a difficult position, and I hope that this will not be repeated in the future. I would not be averse to fighting a proper battle with Ribbentrop... Of course, the circumstances were abnormal, and the reference to Wiedemann and the fact that the memorandum was addressed to me personally proved very useful... To soften the blow to Ribbentrop, I handed a copy to Undersecretary Woermann. He undoubtedly realized that his boss's reaction would be extremely harsh—and

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too. The following day he was strangely mild." (FO 800/269, August 15, 1938.)

Once again, Ribbentrop had to be portrayed as a caricature and Wiedemann's importance emphasized, even though he was merely a traitor who "conspired" against Ribbentrop.

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The conspirators are in charge

Who wants what?

English secret documents reveal that in the first days of August 1938, Hitler's opponents in Germany were preparing to attack. Their most important allies were Hitler's enemies in England. Contacts between the German conspirators and British government agencies became increasingly lively. Both sides agreed that Hitler's successes had to be stopped and that he had to be "inflicted a diplomatic defeat," as Goerdeler had already stated during his visit to London in June 1937. They believed they had already achieved this with their lie of May 21, 1938. While the British, mainly at Henderson's urging, became more cautious, the conspirators urged haste. They needed London's support for their plans for a coup, the preparations for which were in full swing. As we already know from the documents, they therefore spread further falsehoods to England about the allegedly poor economic conditions in Germany and about Hitler and Ribbentrop as "warmongers." They agreed with their English friends that this false news, broadcast via the Luxembourg and Strasbourg radio stations, would fall on fertile ground among "black listeners" in Germany.

Hitler wanted to resolve the Sudeten question on the basis of the right to self-determination. Chamberlain rejected this in order not to further strengthen Hitler's power and prestige. England could not yet afford a war; it was not prepared for it. Attempts were therefore made to convince Chamberlain, the "lifeline of the German conspirators," that a "war against Germany was without risk." The moral, economic, and military preparations were completely inadequate. It is unlikely that Chamberlain

believed all these secret reports, but the conspirators were to serve as his allies. He speculated that they would overthrow Hitler in the event of an attack on Czechoslovakia. In return, the conspirators demanded that the British surrender their economic and military power.

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were very prominent. Some documents show that they were striving for England to declare war. In order to make Hitler's downfall understandable to the German people, they simply claimed that Hitler wanted war! This was to give them the moral backing for his removal.

But Chamberlain had his own plan, which did not always coincide with the intentions of the conspirators. Through his intervention, he prevented the coup from being triggered on several occasions, even though he was very interested in the overthrow of the regime. Did he doubt its success, or did he need the coup at a different time?

The numerous documents from the weeks before the Munich Conference bear witness to how complicated and difficult the problems were for this type of "German-English secret alliance." It is not easy to answer the questions "who wants what" and "who is waiting for whom." It is a game shrouded in mystery between the traitors on one side and the "betrayed empire" on the other. Sometimes the British are in charge, sometimes the conspirators. At first, it seems that the initiative lies with the German traitors. The next documents show their efforts.

The anti-Nazis demand new threats against the Reich from the British government.

When Henlein had his first conversation with Lord Runciman in the presence of Prince Max von Hohenlohe and made very moderate demands (DBFP II, p. 656), the German conspirators in London intervened. They wanted to convince the British that Hitler had now – i.e. during Runciman's presence in Prague – firmly decided to attack Czechoslovakia. For the same purpose, and at the same time as Koerber's talks with Mason-MacFarlane, Henderson had telegraphed Kleist-Schmenzin on August 16, 1938, announcing his visit to the Foreign Office. Major Ewald von Kleist-Schmenzin traveled to London on August 18 with the knowledge of Ludwig Beck, Canaris, and Oster, and spoke there with Churchill, Lord Lloyd, and Vansittart.

Even before Kleist-Schmenzin's trip, Henderson had sent a report from his military attaché Mason-MacFarlane to Halifax on August 17, 1938. In this "Strictly Secret" letter, Kleist is referred to as "X." "X" claimed with great emphasis that

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"that today—August 17—partial mobilization has begun throughout Germany."

"He said that all reservists who had served their full term in the old army, in the Reichswehr or in the Reichsheer, would now be drafted. On the other hand, men from the interim cohorts who had only served briefly would not be drafted ... When I remarked that I was surprised to hear him talk about mobilization, he laughed and said that this 'test mobilization' was the main topic of conversation throughout the country ... He said that he had worked closely with Hitler in the past and had seen how often Hitler lied and broke his firm promises, and that he considered him completely untrustworthy and unreliable. He believed that no one could prevent Mr. Hitler from waging war against Czechoslovakia... such a war would create the conditions that would enable the army to overthrow

Hitler and the party. The moderates in Germany believe that England and France will then be prepared to treat Germany absolutely fairly... The mood in Germany is becoming increasingly hostile toward the regime. 240 men from the Berlin electricity company celebrated the day they were called up as reservists by cutting almost all the cables in the company's main building... Party leaders in official service were greeted by the conscripted reservists with cries of "Pfuil!" ("Get out!"), "We are only slaves!" Kleist told a story, which he swore was true, about a boy who had recently been drafted into service in Spain. The boy's father protested to the local military authorities. Four days later – the usual story – he received the urn containing his son's ashes, but – for a change – he was told outright that the boy had been shot because he had broken his oath not to tell anyone that he had to go to Spain. Kleist said that extensive air defense measures had been ordered... Cooperation in air raid protection was extremely poor. In fact, no one was asking for gas masks... Major General A. from the Air Ministry – War Science Department – told Kleist-Schmenzin that in the event of air raids, the population would leave Berlin and devour the surrounding area like a swarm of locusts, only to eventually starve to death or die of typhus if we did not succeed in bringing the war to a swift end through internal German action against the regime.... Signed F. N. MacFarlane, Colonel Military Attaché. (This document is also signed by Sir Horace Wilson, Sargent, Cadogan, and Halifax. FO 371/21731, C 8451, August 17, 1938.)

Henderson had recommended Kleist-Schmenzin to London as an "emissary of the moderates in the General Staff," adding that he considered it unwise for him to be received by official authorities. Henderson's report was sent to the War Office, Sir Horace Wilson, and Sargent. The "moderates," i.e., the Ver-

The conspirators could not spread enough horror stories about Germany and paint the internal situation in a sufficiently negative light to convince England how easy it would be to overthrow the regime and that a war against Germany would be risk-free. On August 18, Kleist, like the other conspirators, assured Sir Robert Vansittart that Hitler was determined to go to war and that it could only be avoided if the English government stopped Hitler. He could not give the exact date when the bomb would drop, but he insisted that it would be too late after September 27. He did not want to believe that Vansittart did not know the exact date, because he knew that Lord Lloyd had learned "the date of September 28" from a friend in German army circles and had passed it on to Chamberlain. Kleist proposed two "remedies" for the British to use against Germany: 1. The threat of "May 21" must be repeated because Ribbentrop constantly assured Hitler that England and France would do nothing. 2. A leading British statesman should address those Germans who rejected Hitler in a speech. He also referred to May 21 when he declared that "it would mean the end of the regime if war could be avoided again, as it was in May." (DBFP I, p. 684ff.) Without this assistance from the German conspirators, Chamberlain would never have been able to use the lie of May 21 as a propaganda tool to attribute a diplomatic defeat to Hitler.

In the subsequent conversation on August 19, 1938, Kleist-Schmenzin emphasized to Churchill that after Hitler's removal, "a new system of government could be established within 48 hours." When Churchill pointed out that this would also make it easier to resolve the colonial question, for example, Kleist replied that his friends "were not so much thinking of colonies, but rather that the Polish corridor was close to their hearts"! When Churchill rejected this because Hitler himself had officially dropped this demand, Kleist insisted once again that, in the opinion of the military, the corridor was "the real reason for complaint." (DBFP II, p. 687£.) At the same time that the German conspirators wanted to eliminate Hitler because he supported the Sudeten Germans in their right to self-determination, Kleist-

Schmenzin demanded that the Polish Corridor, which Hitler had not demanded at all, be returned to Germany. Even two months later, on October 24, 1938, Hitler did not demand the corridor, but merely Polish consent to the return of the German Free City of Dan-
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into the Reich territory and the granting of an internationally guaranteed motorway and railway line through the corridor. In return, Germany wanted a guarantee of the entire Polish state territory, including the corridor with the former German territories. If Churchill already knew in August 1938 that Hitler wanted to renounce the corridor, how much more must Chamberlain and the British government have known? But Hitler's ideas for a peaceful solution to the Danzig and corridor issues did not fit into the British policy toward Germany, either then or later. Danzig and Poland had to be preserved as a cause for war and remain within reach.

On August 19, 1938, Henderson telegraphed his view of the current German situation to Halifax in 13 points: Hitler wants neither war nor refuge in it as long as "the situation does not force him to do so. At the moment, he is only seeking to erase the impression of defeat created by May 21. Despite this conviction, Henderson recommends to his government that it is better to start the war now than later. In any case, "this was the belief of most Germans"! (DBFPII, No. 0.647.) This recommendation by the British ambassador in Berlin in mid-August 1938 is of utmost importance in determining who was to blame for the Second World War, because it shows that England was already entertaining the idea of a preventive war against Germany at that time. When Henderson adds that most Germans also considered the present moment better than a later one, he is referring only to those men who had entered into the conspiracy with England.

When Chamberlain received the minutes of Vansittart and Churchill's conversations with Kleist-Schmenzin, he compared the fanatical anti-Hitler man who wanted to overthrow the regime to the unsuccessful "Jacobites at the French court during the time of King William," but nevertheless believed that he himself "should do something"! He decided to issue another threat, as he had done on May 27, which was again based on false premises. Although he rejected the conspirators' suggestion to "express themselves more clearly than on May 21," he decided to summon Henderson to London ten days later, "on Monday, the 29th," in such a way "that everyone would know." The ambassador was not to be told that Kleist-Schmenzin was the "source," even though he himself had recommended him to London, but he was to make it known in Germany that he would be consulted about the serious situation in connection with the "Czecho." Chamberlain's comment

Comments on the Kleist-Schmenzins talks in London prove that the interference of the conspirators had hardened his stance on the question of Czechoslovakia. (DBFP II, p. 686f.)

After Chamberlain had forwarded a handwritten letter from Halifax to Kleist-Schmenzin on August 19 (DBFP II, p. 686 ff.), Sir Lancelot Oliphant, Sir Orme Sargent, and Sir Robert Vansittart drafted a signed note on Chamberlain's reaction to Kleist-Schmenzin's visit: "It is clear from the Prime Minister's letter that he was very impressed by what Mr. Kleist said, particularly because it appears to correspond with much of what Lord Hutchinson told him recently after his return from Germany." There was discussion of Henderson's trip to London, which Halifax believed "could not be interpreted as a policy

of pinpricks or provocation, but would keep the Germans guessing." (FO 800/314, August 20, 1938.)

Jan Colvin claims to have orchestrated Kleist's trip because "General Ludwig Beck, Chief of the German General Staff, had requested evidence, i.e., reliable proof that England would fight if Czechoslovakia were attacked." As head of the German conspirators, General Beck promised that he would then "put an end to this regime." Colvin himself confirms that it was "the same Kleist-Schmenzin" whose information about "Czechoslovakia at the time of the crisis of May 21 had been so useful to the Foreign Office." (Colvin, Vansittart...., p. 222£.) Churchill gave Kleist-Schmenzin an unsigned letter dated August 19, 1938, to take to Germany, which was found in his house after the assassination attempt in 1944.

In a Foreign Office memo from "Sir R. Vansittart," they talk about how reliable Kleist-Schmenzin is and suggest that officials Jebb and Breen might be able to give more info on the German envoy of a "small anti-Nazi clique," especially since Breen, a former press attaché in Berlin, "was the mediator of a very similar démarche shortly before the Blomberg crisis." Vansittart continues in his notes:

"If we are convinced that Mr. von Kleist is indeed reliable and speaks for the leaders of the German army, then various conclusions must be drawn. 1. That Hitler himself is determined to start the war. We sometimes believed that he would only use the threat of force to achieve his goals, while he

but even shy away from a European war. According to this information—Kleist-Schmenzins—this is not true; Hitler actually intends to risk war. To prevent this, there is only one viable option: Lord Runciman must present recommendations that satisfy all reasonable demands of the Sudeten Germans —such as local autonomy, minority rights for Czechs in German areas, and a plebiscite after five years, as outlined in Sir Nevile Henderson's recent letter. His Majesty's Government must submit these recommendations to the Czechoslovak Government so that the commitment is officially recognized. To enter into such a commitment without 'self-determination' for the Sudeten Germans would place our Government in a very difficult position both at home and in the Dominions.

Unfortunately, this can only be achieved by exerting very strong pressure on the Czechs, because we must tell them that we will leave them to their fate if they do not accept the Runciman proposals... The arrival of 'anti-Nazis' in our country is always suspicious, because they must fear for their lives, especially if they get away unharmed ... If Mr. von Kleist's information is 100% accurate, should the cabinet not be instructed to take all possible measures to ensure maximum readiness for war in October? This would certainly be more impressive than the public statement proposed by Mr. von Kleist, and it would not carry the risk of encouraging the Czechs to be intransigent. And mustn't public opinion also be prepared? Kleist-Schmenzin emphasized the importance of His Majesty's government issuing a statement that goes further than that of May 21... If it is true that Hitler has finally decided on war, we must show him that our position of May 21 was not a bluff... If we manage to get away with a second May 21, we would certainly weaken the regime's standing, but it would be wrong to believe that we could overthrow the regime. A second diplomatic defeat for Hitler could have the opposite effect, the effect we do not want, namely the acceleration of the war... We have already had several such emissaries from the Reich Army, such as Dr. Goerdeler." (FO 371/21732, August 20, 1938.)

Vansittart's report on his conversation with Kleist-Schmenzin on August 19 was sent to Chamberlain on the same day. The document is signed by Halifax, Sargent, and three other senior Foreign Office officials. (See DBFP II, p. 684ff. and Deutsch-Englische Geheimverbindungen, Tübingen 1967, p. 66.)

The content of this document makes it understandable that Chamberlain wanted to travel to Germany to form his own opinion about the reliability of the conspirators and their statements.

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. After all, Kleist-Schmenzin had first had to convince the British that Hitler "actually intended to risk war"!

form. Kleist-Schmenzin had first had to convince the British that Hitler "actually intended to risk war"! Since Chamberlain did not want war under any circumstances, Runciman was now to give the Sudeten Germans self-determination at all costs. If Prague did not accept this, England would abandon Czechoslovakia. Nevertheless, the British cabinet was to be instructed to take all measures to prepare for war in October. Public opinion also had to be prepared, and all this because Kleist-Schmenzin had lied to the English that Hitler wanted war and that Chamberlain had to make a statement that went further than that of May 21. On the other hand, however, the British did not want "to hasten the war." To resolve these contradictory issues, Chamberlain had to travel to Germany in person to test the conspirators. The publication of this top-secret document by the British government after 1945 must have surprised those familiar with English secrecy practices. After 1918, for example, the highest law was still: Tell a lie and stick to it! Henderson had also warned that England had to prove that it could keep a secret, as this could make all the difference in the future. Just as the success or failure of the German-English conspiracy depended on British secrecy at the time, an objective account of the question of war guilt stands or falls with knowledge of the English secret documents. The publication of British files and the opening of British archives have created the conditions for historical research to uncover the real causes of World War II. Vansittart's report shows that London was already determined at that time to grant the Sudeten Germans the right to self-determination, as Runciman was to recommend. If Prague did not accept this, Benes would have to be dropped. Nevertheless, England should be prepared for war in October. In any case, what Ribbentrop called the "much-vaunted public opinion" had to be prepared for war, even though England wanted to avoid such a military conflict at that time by all means. May 21, based on the lie of German troop movements, was the trump card of the British bluff, to which Vansittart also refers four times in this short report. In 1938, the German conspirators repeatedly demanded in vain from London a

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similar open threat that went "even further than that of May 21." Vansittart was convinced that this would weaken the prestige of the Reich government, but that a "second diplomatic defeat for Hitler would only accelerate the war that we do not want." Kleist-Schmenzin, whose intervention had already triggered England's open threat of May 21, also set the tone for British declarations in August 1938. Although the English government did not yield to all of Kleist-Schmenzin's demands, it nevertheless met the German conspirators halfway. Chamberlain instructed his Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir John Simon, to deliver a speech in Lanark on August 27, 1938, emphasizing British military strength. (Schulthess' Europäischer Geschichtskalender 1938, pp. 311-312.)

A week later, Dr. Karl Abshagen, a German correspondent, returned to London and spoke with Ridsdale, who belonged to the Foreign Office's intelligence department, reporting: "Dr. Abshagen expressed to me in strict confidence his hope that, as a result of the London ministerial meeting of August 24, the British government would issue an irrevocable declaration.This declaration must be stronger than Chamberlain's speech of March 24, 1938. Abshagen, who this time had been "completely

honest" with Ridsdale, stated that "the German army has no illusions about the risk of Hitler's hasty actions. He feared for the Chancellor's mental state, but did not believe that he had already decided to march into Czechoslovakia." (FO 371/21735, C 9271, August 29, 1938.) On the same day, Captain von Albedyli, who had been called up again for special duties as a member of the German attaché group, informed the British military attaché Mason-MacFarlane that reserve formations would be "called up and trained" from September 7 onwards. He emphasized that the army would have to do some things against its own will, because "if we don't cooperate sufficiently, we will lose control." (DBFP II, No. 714.) The German conspirators did indeed control British policy by informing London of everything that could be used against Germany for military and propaganda purposes. British government circles pretended to believe the German traitors because their stories and anecdotes fit too well into Chamberlain's policy. That is why they were spread as truth. At the end of August, Colonel General von Brauchitsch, commander-in-chief of the army, was

by the conspiratorial circle in the Foreign Office about their intention to eliminate Hitler, "fully informed." (Rönnefarth I, p. 393, Kordt, Wahn... ., p. 130, Kordt, Nicht aus den Akten, p. 243£.) On August 30, Colvin wrote to Lord Lloyd about the situation in Germany after Kleist-Schmenzin had reported on his London mission in Berlin. The journalist expressed his satisfaction that both the War Ministry and the Foreign Office had given Kleist's communications "the highest consideration," as well as Churchill's letter, "which Kleist had shown to all important persons in Germany." In an appendix to the letter to Lord Lloyd, Colvin repeated what Kleist had told him personally, for example that England should not force the Prague government to make concessions because this would be "another personal triumph for Hitler." The War Ministry would use a setback in German foreign policy to "wrest power from the party in the Third Reich." (Colvin, Vansittart, p. 233.)

Since May 2, 1938, the British government had been kept informed by German "secret sources" about the allegedly catastrophic situation in the Reich. Fearing that all this would be believed in London, Henderson had already taken a stand against it at the end of July and wrote to Cadogan:

"What you are hearing from secret sources is unreliable, because it comes from men who are anti-Nazi. Dissatisfaction with the regime is growing in Germany, and Germany itself, like Austria, is extremely embittered. That is true, but its effect should not be overestimated. It does not mean that Germany could be weakened by major internal difficulties. For some people, wishful thinking is the father of their thoughts. They foresee the possibility of a weakening of the regime and confirmation of the theory that Germany is unprepared for war. I see the situation quite differently. Nothing can shake the position of Hitler or the regime as long as the army and the police are reliable. No revolution has ever been carried out in a country against the will of the army. It can be carried out if the army is neutral. This was the case when Mussolini marched on Rome in 1922, but it is never possible against the active opposition of the army. This truism applies especially to disciplined and militarized Germany, and I have not the slightest doubt that in the event of an internal or external emergency, the army and the police will support Hitler to the end.

It is true that the nation wants peace, and Hess's recent speech proves that Hitler is aware of this fact. But the internal discontent here is not directed against peace, but against war. The war

is, on the one hand, the inevitable remedy for a dictator against internal discontent and, on the other

hand, the only chance for the discontented to get rid of their rulers. You probably hear a lot about German encouragement of the Sudeten Germans. That is true, but a distinction must be made between official government support and unofficial support from the party. I do not believe that the German government is urging the Sudeten Germans to be unreasonable. My Czech colleague, who is at least very interested in this matter, agrees with me completely on this question. So far, I have had no reason to accuse the German government of any impropriety in this regard. Hess's speech did indeed contain warnings to certain individuals not to be more Catholic than the Pope. This was necessary because unofficial emissaries were undoubtedly providing money and support to incite the Sudeten Germans. It would be almost unbelievable if this were not the case, even in disciplined Germany. If I remember correctly, there were even a number of high-ranking British officials who incited Ulster in the war of 1913-14 against the wishes of the Asquith government.

A third point is the German military preparations. Despite all the secret reports and rumors to the contrary, I regard everything the Germans have done so far as a sign of determination to be ready for all eventualities, but not as evidence of a preconceived plan to unleash a war. I am convinced that neither Hitler nor the army nor the German people want war." (FO 800/269, July 28, 1938.)

While the German conspirators who wanted war to get rid of Hitler kept telling the British that Germany was totally unprepared and way too weak for a war, Henderson saw exactly the opposite. Hitler did not want war, but wanted to be prepared for all eventualities, because the intrigue of May 21 had shown him that he also had to fear the Western powers. The official German government did not stir up the Sudeten Germans.

The situation in Germany could not be better described than Henderson does here. The permanent treason of the German resistance movement against Hitler in 1938 can be traced step by step. With growing concern, Henderson observed how his government became increasingly entangled in the web of German conspirators. Finally, he raised his voice in warning. François-Poncet, his French colleague, was also exposed to the whisperings of these circles. He later confided to his British colleague in Paris, Sir Eric Phipps, that "throughout August and half of September, he had received continuous messages from army emissaries and even from officers."

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War or no war against Germany

Henderson saw his real task as ambassador in the absolute necessity of bringing about a compromise between Berlin and London and making the German situation clear to his government. Instead of relying on German saboteurs to shape British policy, as the Foreign Office and Whitehall did, Henderson repeatedly attempted to exert a moderating influence on British policy toward the Reich, despite the hostility he encountered from the Foreign Office. On August 17, Henderson wrote a private letter to Halifax regarding the upcoming visit of South African envoy D. S. Gie to Runciman in Berlin, stating the following:

"Gie is absolutely in favor of a referendum as the only solution... In his view, self-determination is the only plan for which South Africa and the other dominions will fight. I pointed out the dangers of a plebiscite, but he insisted on his position. And Hugh Wilson, who has read the Foreign Office memorandum, is of the same opinion. Since neither of them is responsible for the plebiscite, it is

natural that they do not find it unpleasant.

Once it has been decided that Austria is one country with Germany, it is inevitable that the Sudetenland will sooner or later become part of Germany. Surgical intervention would be the best solution in everyone's interest, including that of the patient. That is the tragedy of it all. I doubt whether Runciman could leave Prague alive if he said that. If I were him, I would know exactly what I would say: 'Absolute autonomy for the areas where Germans predominate and where Benesch's minority law does not apply. The principle of self-determination must be applied, if necessary after x years.'

If Runciman were brave enough to convince himself that this is the right course, he could march with the English Guard tomorrow on Unter den Linden and receive the welcome of his life. And your mediation would be sought in every country in Europe. There would not be enough Runcimans to do everything, and you would have the approval of the entire empire.

But dreams never come true, and we poor dwarfs will continue to bang our heads against stone walls, getting nowhere, until fate irrevocably intervenes and teaches us a lesson.... I confess once again that I did not like your instructions regarding the memorandum for Hitler. I had hoped it meant that Hitler wished to speak to me, but I have heard nothing from him. I fear that I will receive no reply except an unpleasant one.

from the Secretary of State. I sincerely hope that you know what to do, whatever happens, never to reveal that you have made this démarche. It may be of the utmost importance in the future if we can prove that we can keep a secret. In the last few years, we have been as bad as the French in this respect. If anything is to be done with Hitler, secrecy is the decisive factor.

And please do nothing that might give the impression that we are working against the regime. In fact, it is unpopular here at the moment. Undoubtedly, the fact that there is a danger of a 'coup' by Himmler & Co. would be added to this, but outside interference only has the opposite effect to what is intended... Yours always, Nevile Henderson." (FO 800/269. 17. 8. 1938.)

Chamberlain did not want what Henderson recommended, namely that England should strive for honest mediation between the Sudeten Germans and Prague. Influenced by German traitors, he saw the removal of Hitler as the best possible and most promising solution to the current crisis. But Henderson warned that "what is to be done with Hitler" must be kept strictly secret. On August 19, he telegraphed again that he "did not believe in Hitler's intentions to go to war and that Hitler had certainly not yet made his decision. Everything depended on Lord Runciman, who, nolens volens, had to publish the concept of a just settlement as soon as possible, and it was in any case inappropriate to officially repeat the warning of May 21, 1938, beforehand." (DBFPII, No. 666.)

Unlike Kleist-Schmenzin, who had demanded that Vansittart repeat the British threat of May 21 because Hitler considered it only a "bluff," Henderson rejected any new May 21 because he knew that the threat at that time was based on lies and had been seen through completely by Hitler. Instead, he demanded "cantonal autonomy as the only possible solution for the Sudetenland, because it would still be better than a plebiscite." The British government was dominated by fear of a plebiscite because it knew that it would almost certainly be in Germany's favor. To prevent England from going to war, Henderson emphasized the superiority of German air defenses in the Rhineland and France's inability to do anything without England's help. England itself could do no more than impose a blockade on

Germany. We know from Colvin's book "The Chamberlain Cabinet" that the British blockade could only be successful if Hitler had to defend himself on two fronts. Un-

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England's policy toward Poland was therefore marked by a two-front war. The political developments of 1939 show the means Chamberlain employed and the results he achieved. The very next day, Henderson sent another report from military attaché Mason-MacFarlane, who, based on information from official and secret sources about the situation in Germany, commented as follows: Since the Czech mobilization of May 21, which had never been revoked, reservists had been called up in Bavaria, Austria, Saxony, Brandenburg, and Pomerania. This test mobilization was considered extremely dangerous in "official and other circles." According to general opinion, everything depended on the attitude of Great Britain, which had to act quickly. On August 24, 1938, Mason-MacFarlane asked his government:

"Are we prepared to fight Germany now, fundamentally, but for an invalid reason, the Sudeten question? If we are prepared to say so openly, there would be a small chance of either preventing the catastrophe or at least postponing the war. But if we are not prepared to do so, the Germans will believe that France will not fight despite its declarations. Therein lies the great danger, because then Germany will almost certainly act. A decision must be made immediately whether we decide to say 'no' or not." (DBFP II, No. 692.)

Even the British military attaché in Berlin, who had been let in on Koerber's plans for a coup, advised against fighting Germany because the Sudeten Germans' right to self-determination wasn't a valid reason. Mason-MacFar-lane's demand that his government finally make its position clear was a wasted effort. Chamberlain's policy was based precisely on trying to keep the Reich government guessing about Britain's real intentions. Finally, on August 25, 1938, Henderson suggested either agreeing to a plebiscite in the Sudetenland or telling the Czechs that they would be left to their fate. In a private letter dated August 22, the ambassador addressed the much-debated issue of whether or not to go to war with Germany and posed the decisive question to Halifax:

"Must we or must we not fight Germany again? The followers of the Crowe tradition in your department have long argued that this is inevitable. I consider such an attitude to be nothing less than disastrous." (DBFP II, No. 665.)

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In this commentary on Kleist's secret information, which was not intended for the cabinet, Henderson expresses his view that in a war against Germany, which Hitler did not want and which would never be possible without British help, England would be fighting for a "bad cause" and would be on the "worst side." England had neither the "earthly nor divine right" to continue to chain the three million Sudeten Germans to the Czechs. Of course, the German army had to be prepared for all eventualities, but Hitler's decision to attack was "untrue"! Henderson, who had the unfortunate good fortune to know all sides, knew that the German conspirators were constantly feeding the British government with Hitler's alleged intentions to attack. The ambassador himself considered further English wars against Germany to be a misfortune, because England would then one day "be defeated itself." This has now happened, even though Hitler wanted to guarantee the preservation of the Empire and was prepared to use the

power of the German Reich to achieve this. In his letter of August 22, 1938, Henderson saw a great opportunity for the future that "England would never again have to fight against Germany"! He emphasized that in politics, geography always has the last word, and that the British government should therefore not interfere in Germany's relations with its eastern neighbors.

Henderson's self-assured letter of August 22, 1938, to Halifax, written from a position of strength (DBFP II, No. 665) is full of significance because it is an open response to the secret information provided by Koerber and Kleist-Schmenzin and because the British ambassador rejects the realization of the German coup plans even if they would help England to victory once again. The ambassador uses the same arguments as Ribbentrop in "A 5522" and the accompanying "conclusions," for example, that England would postpone the war if necessary, and he also refers to the Crowe Memorandum of 1907, whose thesis still dominates circles inside and outside the Foreign Office.

On August 24, Henderson received instructions, decided upon by Chamberlain five days earlier, to "be in London on Monday morning, August 29." (DBFP II, 686.) The ambassador attended the cabinet meeting on August 30 and heard for the first time officially of Chamberlain's intention to fly to Germany and visit Hitler. This "unusual and daring undertaking almost took Halifax's breath away" (Feiling: The Life of

Neville Chamberlain. London 1946, p. 357), because this planned trip was closely connected with the secret information Kleist-Schmenzin had. As his closest associate, he must also have known Chamberlain's intention to put the German conspirators through their paces and to convince himself personally whether they would support the fight against Hitler to the end.

On the same day, August 30, Sargent of the Foreign Office wrote a report on what the British government should do now. He begins his memorandum with the following words:

"The Prime Minister considered it self-evident that Hitler had decided to attack Czechoslovakia, and he calculated the date for the start of the attack to be shortly after the end of the party congress, around September 15.

It is true that Dr. Benesch has since offered a new basis for negotiation, and should Hitler agree, a negotiated settlement of the Sudeten question would be possible. We will soon know whether he—Hitler—will allow such a settlement or not. If he does, so much the better. We will then in any case have a respite before the Germans renew their pressure in some other form.

But should Hitler, despite our warnings, realize that he has gone too far to turn back, or that the settlement now agreed upon is of no use to him because he must have what he wants immediately, this will mean the destruction of Czechoslovakia—with all of Bohemia under direct German control. Under these circumstances, we can expect a sudden change in German tactics. Instead of attacking because of or after the deadlock in negotiations between the Czech government and the Sudeten Germans, he will organize unrest or assassinations in Czechoslovakia to justify his intervention, even during the negotiations, in order to protect the Sudeten Germans, punish the "aggressors," and restore order. There are many signs that this development has already begun. A spectacular method of creating the necessary conditions would be to arrange the assassination of Henlein or even that of Lord Runciman by a Czech 'v. d. Lubbe'. It cannot be considered impossible that Himmler has been commissioned to carry out such a plot.

The question therefore arises as to what His Majesty's Government should do to prevent war. Apart from general humanitarian reasons and the aversion to the use of force, there seem to be three reasons which, in view of His Majesty's Government's material interests, require us to prevent war if possible:

1. His Majesty's Government would like to prevent war because of the danger of being drawn into it. This danger is the argument put forward in the Prime Minister's statement of March 24, the warning to Sir N. Henderson...

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sons of May 21, the letter from the Secretary of State – Halifax – to von Ribbentrop of July 28, and the speech by Sir John Simon of August 27. But we must assume – since Hitler's decision to go to war – that he either does not believe in the danger or, if he does believe in it, does not fear British intervention. In the latter case, there is nothing to say or do. But the former case is more likely: namely, that Hitler, after being briefly impressed in May, now believes that we are only bluffing and that he can safely call our bluff. And what is the real situation with us? Do we believe in the danger of being drawn into a German-Czech war, or have we merely invented this bogey to frighten the Germans? Won't Hitler argue that if we really feared this danger, we would be making special efforts at this critical time to prepare for a war that we knew would very soon draw us in?

2.8. The government would like to prevent a German-Czech war because it anticipates that, once started and localized, it would result in the annexation of the whole of Bohemia by Germany, as well as the rapid control and subjugation of Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria by Germany in terms of foreign policy, the army, trade, the supply of raw materials, and the enormous increase in Germany's power throughout Europe, both morally and physically.

After all, one could also take the opposite view of the consequences of a German conquest of Bohemia, and the Prime Minister stated on August 24 that, in his opinion, such a conquest would not mean any additional strength for Germany and could even embarrass it and thus become the cause of its weakness.

3. The Polish government would like to prevent a German-Czech war because it would undermine Hitler's prestige, weaken the extremist elements in Germany, and encourage those elements that want to overthrow the regime. This argument can, of course, be countered. Firstly, Hitler's prestige would not be undermined but strengthened if he obtained all the Sudeten demands without a fight. Again, as the Prime Minister put it on August 24, the arguments of the moderate elements in Germany resemble those of the Jacobites at the court of Louis XIV, who claimed that they could overthrow William III if Louis threatened him sufficiently.

On this point, it can undoubtedly be said that a successful war against Czechoslovakia would considerably consolidate Hitler's regime and destroy the opposition in Germany for an indefinite period. Although these arguments have their weak points, I nevertheless believe that they are all worth being examined immediately by His Majesty's Government to see whether or not measures should be taken to prevent this war. Should these measures prove to be of any use, it is crucial that...

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that they be implemented before Hitler delivers his speech at the party congress beginning on

September 5. This leaves His Majesty's Government only a few days to make its decision. It will be much more difficult and much more humiliating for Hitler if he has to back down in response to British pressure after he has publicly committed himself at the party congress. Another reason for a quick decision is that no orders have yet been issued to speed up the 'incident' in Czechoslovakia, which is supposed to provide the pretext for a German invasion. Signed O. S. Sargent." (FO 371/21734. 30. 8. 1938.)

Sargent notes in his memorandum that Halifax had read it and discussed the question of his return to Berlin with Henderson. Halifax instructed Henderson "what language to use toward Mr. von Weizsäcker." He was not to ask for a conversation with Ribbentrop, but only to inform Weizsäcker that he was at Ribbentrop's disposal if the latter wished to speak to him.

At the end of his marginal notes, Sargent writes: "As for the memorandum itself, its contents were discussed in detail in the Cabinet this morning, and considerations were made and rejected as to what special measures His Majesty's Government should take in the event of a German-Czech war." Every piece of information from the German conspirators was followed closely by a reaction from the British government.

On the four pages of the original document, Sir Orme Sargent summarizes the entire British policy during the Czech crisis: After the visit of Kleist-Schmenzin on August 18 and 19, Chamberlain believed that Hitler intended to attack Czechoslovakia in mid-September, even though this information came from only one conspirator. In reality, the prime minister did not believe any of these falsehoods, but they gave him the opportunity to portray Hitler as determined to go to war. Chamberlain did not want a German-Czech war, firstly because England could be drawn into it without being ready for battle. Secondly, because a localized war would have enabled Hitler to gain control and subjugate the whole of Bohemia, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria. Thirdly, because without a war, Hitler could be accused of backing down, which would "undermine his prestige" and encourage the conspirators to "overthrow the regime."

This British policy included the usual insinuations, here, for example, that Henlein or Lord Runciman were to be murdered by a "v. d. Lubbe" commissioned by the Germans. This would kill two birds with one stone.

by blaming the Reichstag fire of 1933 on Germany and invoking old claims about Hitler's so-called humiliations, i.e., Chamberlain's warning statement of March 24, Henderson's official threat of May 21, which caused Hitler to back down, Halifax's inconsequential letter to Ribbentrop on July 28, and Sir John Simon's renewed warnings on August 27, 1938. And in all this, England did not want a German-Czech war under any circumstances. Sargent himself is aware of the British bluff and asks his government quite openly whether its feigned readiness for war is nothing more than an invented "bogey," a specter intended to impress the Germans with this threat.

On the same day, August 30, 1938, US Ambassador Joseph P. Kennedy visited the British Prime Minister, who told him that "the possibility of war cannot be ruled out." Kennedy seemed "astonished"! Chamberlain then explained to him that he had "received a great deal of information indicating that Hitler was determined to invade Czechoslovakia." Furthermore, he had been "advised by several sources to make a statement that Great Britain would use force to prevent Hitler from doing so. Then Hitler would abandon his intention." Chamberlain's "sources" were the reports of the German

conspirators. In response to their demands for renewed British threats, the Prime Minister told the American ambassador: "However, we are not in a position to stop Hitler - e.g. because of our position in the air, the weakness of France, etc., etc. - and under these circumstances it would be unwise to threaten." He was considering what should be done if "the Runciman mission failed." If Hitler attacked Czechoslovakia, he could "not be stopped, not even in other areas, and then Germany would rule Europe." He went on to explain that the "annexation of Austria had been carried out without difficulty, but world opinion had been aroused." He believed that if France intervened and England supported it, "the United States would follow sooner or later." Kennedy concluded by confirming that President Roosevelt was determined "to stand by Chamberlain whatever he did" and asked only to be informed of the moment when Chamberlain believed that Roosevelt should take action. (FO 371/21734, signed H. W. - Horace Wilson - August 30, 1938.)

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Henderson with Ribbentrop in Sonnenburg, Eastern Germany.
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On August 31, 1938, Henderson returned to Berlin and gave a dinner for German guests at his embassy that same evening, where he had a private conversation with Weizsäcker. There is a "note from the State Secretary" dated September 1, marked "Confidential! St. S. No. 30.38. g. Rs." and at the end simply marked "To the Reich Minister." This transcript, like Weizsäcker's biased, distorted, and falsified "No.""No." records written by Weizsäcker since July 1938, which were only written for his "cassette," were of course not intended for the Reich Foreign Minister, but for the English, the circle of conspirators, and, after a successful coup, as incriminating documents for the prosecution of Ribbentrop. The Weizsäcker notes intended for official circulation in the Foreign Office were all marked with "No.," as was customary in Germany. "

Henderson reported to Halifax about his secret meeting with the State Secretary and his assertion that "it was impossible to convince Ribbentrop that England would ever, under any circumstances, take action." (DB

Henderson reported to Halifax on his secret conversation with the State Secretary and his assertion that "it was impossible to convince Ribbentrop that England would ever act, under any circumstances." (DBFP U, No. 736; on Weizsäcker's "cassette" documents.) With this blatant lie—Weizsäcker was familiar with all of Ribbentrop's memoranda and his conviction that England would always fight if it ever felt stronger than Germany—the secret struggle against the foreign minister was continued and spread by the members of the German-English conspiracy as a slogan that Hitler was being misadvised by Ribbentrop.

Ribbentrop received Henderson at his request on September 1, 1938, at his country house Sonnenburg near Freienwalde a.d. ©. The ambassador declared that the Sudeten Germans and Czechs were "completely indifferent" to England, but that "the honor of France was at stake." Ribbentrop replied that "the Franco-Czech military alliance was based on the Versailles mentality. It was immoral because it resulted in the oppression of 3.5 million Sudeten Germans. France was not only not obliged, but not even entitled to intervene in a conflict provoked by the Czechs." If it did so nonetheless, it would mean an aggressive war of conquest, to which Germany would respond accordingly. Ribbentrop was still very much aware that the Chamberlain government had officially declared during the May crisis that it would support Prague in the event of

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stand, "no matter what Czech provocations were made." Ribbentrop therefore concluded by telling Ambassador Henderson: "A repetition of May 2 is out of the question. It is not France's honor that is at stake, but Germany's alone." (File II, Doc. 425.)

Ribbentrop was saying the same thing that Henderson had written to Halifax eight days earlier: the English and French had neither "the earthly nor the divine right to continue to chain the Sudeten Germans to the Czechs." In response to Henderson's remark, made in accordance with his instructions, that since he had taken office the mood in England had "become increasingly worse," Ribbentrop replied that there must obviously be "something wrong" in England, since Hitler had always pursued a consistent policy of balance and "safeguarding English interests" (ibid.). Henderson shared this view, believing that England would never again need to fight Germany. For this to be the case, however, English foreign policy would have had to be in order. Henderson knew, however, that Chamberlain's policy toward Germany was not in order, as Ribbentrop had told Eden, because it relied on the support of German conspirators to bring down the Reich.

Weizsäcker's secret meeting with Burckhardt in Berlin's Tiergarten

At the same time as Henderson was with Ribbentrop in Sonnenburg, the German State Secretary von Weizsäcker informed the seemingly neutral High Commissioner of Danzig, C. J. Burckhardt, about an impending assassination attempt on Hitler and revealed to him "in complete openness and without any precautions how deeply he himself was involved in the conspiracy and that he was in contact with Canaris." (Burckhardt: Meine Danziger Mission, p. 182.) The topic of their conversation was "destroying the Hitler nest!" That was why Canaris was "in close contact" with General Halder, because without the military, a change in Germany was impossible, since, as Weizsäcker said, one could not shoot with our "foreign office files." Precisely because the official German files could not be used to "shoot" at the Reich government, Weizsäcker drew up these undated, unsigned notes, which he kept in a filing cabinet, in order to use them as paper arrows against his own country. Already a few

Days later, Henderson warned his government that the "arrow" against Hitler should not be fired publicly too soon, because England was not yet sufficiently prepared for war. After Burckhardt had been informed by von Weizsäcker in a quiet corner of Berlin's Tiergarten park about the full scope of the conspiracy with the potential English enemy, as well as about the secret mission of Erich Kordt, Koerber and Kleist-Schmenzin in London, he traveled to Bern that same night to inform the British ambassador there, Sir George Warner, of everything he had learned in secret from the German state secretary. Burckhardt even called Halifax's office in London and conveyed "Weizsäcker's wish and advice in the manner possible with intercepted telephone conversations." (Burckhardt, p. 183.) At the same time, the High Commissioner reported to the British League of Nations delegate Ralph Skrine Stevenson in Bern on the situation in Danzig, who forwarded it in writing from Geneva to Strang at the Foreign Office. His letter, published in British documents, is one of the most astonishing testimonies to the cooperation between the German conspirators and the official British government in 1938. The Burckhardt report forwarded by Stevenson is based on the Swiss diplomat's conversation with Weizsäcker in Berlin's Tiergarten. In it, the Danzig Gauleiter Forster is accused of having spoken about

"German plans for conquest," which Burckhardt, however, had described to Weizsäcker as "nonsense" because they "did not correspond at all to the ideas of the Führer." Weizsäcker interrupted him with a contemptuous "resigned wave of his hand" and explained that they did indeed represent "the ideas of the Führer." Hitler was now completely under the "spell of Ribbentrop," who was telling him that he had "nothing to fear from England and hardly anything to fear from France." General Ludwig Beck, on the other hand, had "plucked up his courage and told Hitler the truth." His subsequent offer to resign had been accepted. Weizsäcker had also tried to open Hitler's eyes, but the State Secretary had not offered to resign. Weizsäcker himself called his conversation with Burckhardt a "risky and unusual step, which had of course been taken behind the backs of the state leadership," and he described his actions as "double-dealing in an official position." (Weizsäcker, p. 178.) Weizsäcker could not have made his treason clearer, and even Burckhardt found his demand for

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a sharp statement by the British government against Germany as a "very serious request" because Chamberlain would hesitate for a long time before committing England in the manner proposed by the German State Secretary. Stevenson was unable to keep his promise to Burckhardt to keep Weizsäcker's name secret because the step taken by a high-ranking German official was "unprecedented." (DBFP U, p. 689 ff.; Burckhardt, p. 183 ff.) It was indeed unprecedented in Germany for "highest officials such as Weizsäcker and top military leaders such as Ludwig Beck and Admiral Canaris, i.e., the 'elite,' to call on England, a potential enemy, to take action against their own country, Germany. It was probably also unprecedented that this 'double game' in an official position was continuously based on the same lie, namely that Ribbentrop—as ambassador and foreign minister—had advised Hitler that he need not fear either England or France. game in official positions' was continuously based on the same lie, namely that Ribbentrop – as ambassador and foreign minister – had advised Hitler that he need fear neither England nor France, while in reality Ribbentrop had always warned Hitler never to forget that England was our most dangerous enemy.

The conspirators were not ordinary traitors, whom every government must reckon with—they were much more dangerous. They collected lies and insinuations about German politics and passed them on to the English government so that it could act accordingly. They corrupted not only German morale, but also the morale of the entire world. And this pestilence is still having an effect today, starting with the Hess affair and ending with the legal shooting of the Wall.

Around this time, the High Commissioner of Danzig, Burckhardt, wrote a personal and confidential letter to the British League of Nations official Walters about the situation in Germany as he saw it since February 4: Himmler was fighting Göring for power in the army, and there was a danger that the SS leader had the means to provoke a spontaneous revolution among the Sudeten Germans. There was no "Reich government." All revolutionary organizations and the various leaders were only wearing uniforms to give the impression of unity that did not actually exist. With regard to Poland, Burckhardt continued, quoting verbatim:

"The Poles are waiting with apparent calm. During our nighttime walk by the sea, Colonel Beck gave me a glimpse of his cards. He is always playing a double game. It is not the German game, as some Frenchmen and the Polish opposition believe.

It is a game that calculates the greatest possible advantage for Poland in the event of a catastrophe that Germany will not escape. That is why we must encourage the Germans to make mistakes and, as far as Danzig is concerned, we should gladly let the extremists have their way ...

Beck is pursuing a selfish Polish policy, fundamentally anti-German, seemingly German, but only since the occupation of the Rhineland and French passivity. On the decisive day, he will stand on the side of the stronger. But we must give him credit for encouraging the Germans in their mistakes...

I saw the Gauleiter of East Prussia, Koch, the Reich Minister of Economics, Funk, the Minister of Agriculture, Darre, the German ambassador in Warsaw, Moltke, and the Polish ambassador in Berlin, Lipski. Darre told me: 'My boss—Hitler—will avoid all rash actions; the influences that want to push him into risky ventures will go unheard; he will have the strength to endure provocations, because he believes that in the current situation there is no reason to risk a conflict. He is prepared to resolve the problems through international talks.' Moltke spoke in the same vein in his calm manner ...

Lipski believes, as I do, that the détente was achieved through Italian intervention, based on a German initiative attributed to Göring." (FO 371/21735, C 9261; Danzig, August 20, 1938; personal confidential, Burckhardt.)

Burckhardt used his position as High Commissioner of the Free City of Danzig to spy on everything and report back to the British government.

Weizsäcker's secret message to Halifax

The conspirators continued to direct events. After his conversation with Weizsäcker in Berlin's Tiergarten, Burckhardt informed London that "the National Socialist regime would collapse after its first defeat." (Burckhardt, p. 183ff.) The next informant to come forward was Theo Kordt, who on September 5, "on instructions from his brother Erich," told Sir Horace Wilson at the Foreign Office:

"There is a conspiracy against Hitler in Germany, and only a resolute and unambiguous stance by England and France will give the conspirators a chance on the day when German mobilization is announced." (Colvin: Vansittart... .,p. 235.)

Two days later, during the night of September 7 to 8, Theo Kordt secretly entered 10 Downing Street through the garden gate and personally handed Halifax a letter "formulated by Weizsäcker."

lierte Erklärung" (Rothfels: Die deutsche Opposition gegen Hitler; Krefeld 1951, p. 74). It reads as follows:

"According to our precise knowledge, Hitler is planning an attack on Czechoslovakia and assumes that the resulting war can be localized, that is, that France will not fulfill its alliance obligations to Czechoslovakia. The political and military circles for which I speak are vehemently opposed to this policy. We believe that if Hitler's policy of force is allowed to proceed unchecked at this moment, it will mean that the way will be blocked forever for a return to the concepts of honor and decency among European nations. After the World War, Lloyd George declared that the peoples and governments had in reality 'slid into' it. The men I speak for believe that the situation in July 1914 would not have

become so hopeless if Sir Edward Grey, on behalf of the British government, had made it quite clear that, in the event of a Franco-German war, Great Britain would come to France's aid. Such a timely warning would have had a moderating influence on the decision of the imperial government. If, therefore, France is willing to fulfill its obligations to its Czechoslovak ally, and if the assurances of the Prime Minister are sincere that the British Empire cannot stand aside in such a case, my friends consider it necessary that the British Government make this decisive fact clear. The declaration we propose cannot be too clear or too firm for the purpose we have in mind. Hitler and Ribbentrop will probably not dare to start a war if an open British declaration makes it clear to the German people that a major war is inevitable in the event of an attack. Should Hitler nevertheless persist in his war policy, I am in a position to assure you that the political and military circles for which I speak will "arm themselves against a sea of troubles by resisting them" (quote from Hamlet's monologue). In German public opinion, as well as in responsible circles of the army, Hitler's war is unpopular and regarded as a crime against civilization. If the requested statement is made, the leaders of the army are prepared to oppose Hitler's policy by force of arms. A diplomatic defeat would mean a very serious setback for Hitler in Germany and would in fact bring about the end of the National Socialist regime." (Documents of German Politics and History, Berlin 1951, vol. 4, p. 447.)

Here, the British government was informed of what it already knew from Burckhardt's conversation with Weizsäcker, namely that Hitler was to be eliminated both in the event of the expected outbreak of war and as a result of a possible retreat in the face of British threats. In this message from the German State Secretary

The German representative pointed out the situation before 1914 and demanded that England, unlike then, publicly declare its intentions toward Germany "unequivocally and firmly." In its presumptuousness, the German circle of conspirators believed that Chamberlain, who did not want the Czech war at all, could be forced to make a sharp statement against Germany. Weizsäcker promised that, upon receiving the requested sharp British statement, the German army would "take up arms against Hitler." It would be enough for England to remain unyielding on the question of the Sudeten Germans' right to self-determination, because even a "diplomatic defeat" would mean a serious setback for Hitler within Germany and would in fact "bring about the end of the National Socialist regime."

Chamberlain responded immediately to this urgent secret message from Weizsäcker. The American ambassador in London, Joseph P. Kennedy, recognized as early as September 8, 1938, that the prime minister had "completely changed" his intention not to become involved in a German-Czech conflict. Kennedy told the German embassy counselor von Selzam that "there was a new gleam in Chamberlain's eyes that he had never noticed before," adding that this time the British were "not joking." At the same time, he expressed to Selzam his admiration for Hitler's ideas in the social and economic spheres, to which Germany owed so much and which could also serve as a model for the economic reconstruction of the United States. (File II, Doc. 460.) That was the view of an American. The German conspirators, however, portrayed Hitler within their circles and abroad as a "criminal" who must be eliminated for the good of the German people as soon as it was "clear to the whole world that he had recklessly plunged Germany into the misfortune of a new world war or was about to do so. Only in the case of an obvious criminal is disobedience permissible. In any case, the leaders of the Wehrmacht should not appear to the nation as traitors or saboteurs, but as its saviors." (Ritter, p. 185f.) To justify this, they wanted, with the help of the Berlin psychiatrist Prof. Bonhoeffer, whose two sons were deeply involved in the conspiracy, to declare Hitler "mentally ill" or provoke an incident in the Reich Chancellery in which "Hitler would be shot." (Ritter, p. 189.) The Italian ambassador said that

England was aware of all these plans.

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Attolico criticized the "recklessness, naivety, and indiscretion" of the conspirators, who had based everything on a common "gentleman's agreement"; this was as "stupid as the ideas of cadets." (Burckhardt, p. 306.) i

Sir Horace Wilson: What does "H" say when "X" comes to Germany?

Another immediate consequence of Weizsäcker's secret message to Halifax was the consideration of whether Chamberlain should fly to Germany earlier than planned. This is evident from a "Very Secret" unpublished letter from Sir Horace Wilson to Henderson. One day after Theo Kordt secretly entered 10 Downing Street on the night of September 7-8, Horace Wilson wrote to Henderson on September 9 that he had considered the following options with Chamberlain regarding his trip to Berlin:

"With an eye on Nuremberg, we considered having you tell H (Hitler) that X (Chamberlain) was thinking of coming to Germany to talk to him and at the same time asking him not to say anything unfriendly during his speech on Monday. However, we then considered that there were a number of objections to this plan. Perhaps most importantly, it could give H the opportunity to have Ribbentrop write a long reply full of all sorts of uncomfortable questions, most of which would create a fog that would be difficult to penetrate. But then we would have fired our arrow and have nothing left in reserve...

Today we discussed whether X could possibly receive a statement from you upon his arrival in Berlin to the effect that H does not wish to see him or is perhaps 'ill' and unable to see him. This would be very embarrassing and would not be well received here. What do you think about this and how do you think H is likely to react? Would he be so pleased by the honor of a visit that he would be dissuaded from rejecting him? Would he perhaps consider it worthwhile to challenge us (flaunt) and thereby arouse world opinion, which would undoubtedly turn against him even more?

If you believe that there is a risk of rejection, then the alternative for you – after you have heard from us – is to let H know that X proposes to come and will arrive in B (Berchtesgaden) at such and such a time. You would then have to ask H to indicate the time at which he would be willing to see X. This would give H time to say 'no' if he wanted to, and enable you to convey the answer to us before X leaves here. This would reduce the risk of rejection.

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On the other hand, if the answer is no, X would never have an opportunity to present his case, and the last chance for peace would be lost. Furthermore, the dramatic surprise effect, which X attaches some importance to, would be weakened. We kindly ask you to consider all this carefully and let us know your views as soon as possible." (FO 800/269/8096.)

Sir Horace Wilson

I do not have Henderson's reply to this letter. Sir Horace Wilson's considerations are the result of the false reports of the German conspirators, including the "inconvenient Ribbentrop," whom they want to eliminate so they don't have to answer uncomfortable questions. The simplest option is realized when

Chamberlain announces on September 13 that he will meet with Hitler on the 15th.

Chamberlain's flight to Berchtesgaden had nothing to do with war or no war on Prague's side, because the British had long since decided not to fight for Czechoslovakia at that point. The real purpose of Chamberlain's trips to Germany was a precautionary measure: as the head of government, he had to take a close look at the German circle of conspirators in order to decide for himself whether he could rely on these men who had promised to eliminate Hitler within 48 hours of a declaration of war, which would have avoided the real battle for England. Ribbentrop had already written about this British policy in "A 5522": "England will never recklessly risk war. It will always carefully weigh the balance of power and, if necessary, delay decisions. Once the odds are in England's favor, it will fight!" England's situation had changed greatly in its favor since its cooperation with the putschists. But in 1938, Chamberlain still had to delay the war until he was convinced of the strength and determination of the German conspirators and had won Poland as an ally in 1939.

Ongoing news of the coup

While the party congress in Nuremberg was proceeding according to plan since September 8, the British received constant inquiries from all over the world about how they would respond to a collapse of Hitler's government. Edgar Mowrer, for example, reported that

Paris correspondent for the Chicago Daily News, that Wohltat, Göring's right-hand man for the implementation of the Four-Year Plan, had come to him in Basel to find out whether America would advocate good treatment of the German people after the "collapse of the Nazi regime." This is evident from a report by the American Peake dated September 10, 1938, to Stevenson. Stevenson is the British League of Nations official who forwarded the contents of the Burckhardt-Weizsäcker conversation of September 1 to London. (DBFP II, p. 689 ff.) The Foreign Office official Roberts added the following handwritten note to Peake's letter:

"A large number of envoys with messages from German conservative circles, mainly from the General Staff, have recently visited us. However, none of them had such close ties to Field Marshal Göring... Wohltat is not a Nazi... This rapprochement reinforces the fact that we are expected to play the game of the anti-Nazis in Germany, who would very much like to see a general war in order to get rid of the Nazi regime." (FO 371/21738, C 9934.)

This Peake report was also read by the top echelons of the British government: Halifax, Vansittart, Cadogan, and Strang.

Henderson made all kinds of observations in Nuremberg. He noticed the "great uncertainty of almost all Foreign Office officials." He saw the reason for this in their "aversion to Ribbentrop and for all sorts of other reasons," by which he probably meant the German-English conspiracy. The aversion to Ribbentrop was more than understandable, since the cooperation between the Weizsäcker circle and the official British government had to be kept secret by all possible means. Henderson's last experience in Nuremberg was "a farewell dinner in the dining car with the Foreign Office officials, without Ribbentrop. Some of them spoke to my colleagues a great deal about betrayal." (DBFP II, p. 651ff., column in original.)

When Henderson recited his "little speech" in Nuremberg to all Germans he deemed suitable: England

would fight alongside Czechoslovakia against Germany, Halder sent an officer to London to urge the British government, from a military standpoint, to take an "energetic stance" against Germany on the Sudeten question. (Kordt: Not from... $S.258.) In his memoirs, Weizsäcker writes that for the first time on September 13, 1938, "Hitler's determination was initiated without further ado," which was repeated a second time on "September 27." (Weizsäcker, p. 193.) On

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On this tense September 13, however, Chamberlain announced to Hitler that he would meet with him "at the earliest opportunity." He obviously wanted to prevent the chancellor's arrest, because unrest in Central Europe did not fit into his plans at that time. As a cautious calculator and the chosen "lifeline" of the German conspirators, he had to personally verify their determination and the accuracy of the secret information that was pouring out of the inexhaustible conspiratorial source before he imposed on his country the "heavy obligation" of allying itself with foreign men who were not subject to his authority. (FO 800/314, September 15, 1938, Burckhardt to Weizsäcker.)

On September 15, 1938, Halifax received a situation report on Germany. This time, the author of the letter was the Berlin correspondent of a large chemical company in London.

Another report from Vansittart to Halifax was based on information that a Colonel Christie had received "from various important men in German heavy industry." (FO 371/21737, C 9876, September 5, 1938.)

The American embassy in Moscow had also heard about the coup plans. Chargé d'Affaires Alexander Kirk, who had been "informed in the strictest confidence by a German who returned from Berlin yesterday" about these intentions, telegraphed information to Secretary of State Hull. (FDRL. PSF August 19, 1938, No. 298.)

In all reports, the British were always told the same lies: that there was discontent in Germany, that the German army was in a state of chaos, and that the Hitler government would soon collapse if Britain maintained a firm stance.

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Chamberlain collects peace alibis

"X" at "H": Chamberlain at Obersalzberg

It was not until September 14 that Chamberlain announced to the cabinet "his intention to pay a personal visit to Hitler." Duff Cooper commented on the prime minister's authoritarian behavior: "We were not asked, but presented with a fait accompli, for the telegram had already been sent.... We were ordered to remain silent." (Duff Cooper: That Cannot Be Forgotten, p. 290.)

On September 15, 1938, Chamberlain arrived in Berchtesgaden, accompanied by Sir Horace Wilson, chief advisor to the British government on technical matters and Chamberlain's main liaison with the German conspirators. There, Weizsäcker and Henderson directed the not insignificant formalities for the upcoming German-English talks. They had arranged that Chamberlain "should speak to Hitler with no other witness than the interpreter Paul Schmidt, because it was essential to keep Ribbentrop away." (Kordt: Nicht aus... [Not from...], p. 259; Schmidt: Als Statist auf diplomatischer Bühne [As an extra

on the diplomatic stage], p. 395.) Hitler, of course, knew nothing of this intrigue, otherwise he would not have asked Chamberlain after tea whether he would like to have "two or three people present" at the meeting. The Prime Minister preferred a "tête-à-tête" with the Chancellor. According to Schmidt, Hitler took it for granted that he himself would attend the meeting as a "neutral" interpreter. Hitler could not have known what tasks Schmidt was assigned, who, as a front man in the guise of an interpreter, passed on all important information from Hitler's state talks to his conspiratorial friends. (Rothfels: Opposition gegen Hitler, p. 69.)

At the beginning of the conversation, Hitler wanted to know from Chamberlain whether he was prepared to "agree to the secession of the Sudeten German territories on the basis of the right of peoples to self-determination." This right to self-determination had not been invented by him in 1938, but had already been established in 1918 to create a moral basis for the revision of the Treaty of Versailles. (File II, Doc. 487.) Chamberlain replied on his own behalf "that he accepted the principle of the solution of the Sudeten question

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German territories." Hitler emphasized that he found the previous stance of England and France on the Sudeten German question incomprehensible, since London had given the Irish their freedom by peaceful means and Paris had allowed the Saar region to return to Germany in the same way. In the Sudeten region, however, not even a vote could take place without England threatening war against Germany, which would of course be a fight "to the death." He found such an attitude incomprehensible. At that time, no one who was not privy to the conspiracy of those who repeatedly urged England to remain firm, arguing that this would lead to the elimination of Hitler and his government, could understand the English position.

At Chamberlain's request, Hitler assured him in this conversation that he would not take any military action while the British cabinet was deliberating over the next few days. However, the British government should also persuade Czechoslovakia to withdraw its mobilization orders—which London never did—because, in Hitler's view, such threats could easily lead to a "new May 21 and a very serious situation." Referring to the 1935 naval agreement, Hitler emphasized that "the basis of this treaty is to be seen solely in a kind of obligation on the part of both partners not to wage war against each other under any circumstances." However, since England was considering military conflict with Germany whenever it pleased, while Germany was strictly adhering to its voluntary limitation of fleet strength, this would be a disadvantage for Germany "precisely at the hour of warning." It would therefore be more correct for him to terminate the agreement. Chamberlain replied that he had "considered the warning of May 2 necessary because England would have been accused after 1914 of not having made its intentions clear enough."

This again clearly shows the dependence of British policy on the German conspirators, for Weizsäcker had, as is well known, used this argument only eight days earlier in his secret message, i.e., the comparison with 1914, to induce Chamberlain to issue an official threat against Germany. In his conversation with Hitler, Chamberlain recognized both his determination to support the Sudeten Germans in their right to self-determination to the utmost and his conviction that Czechoslovakia could not survive for long because the other minorities would also want to secede from this state.

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Chamberlain did not contradict these German statements.

The official transcript by interpreter Schmidt shows that the Hitler-Chamberlain negotiations were conducted calmly until the British prime minister's final remark, when he said he wanted to "yield to the natural English tendency toward friendship with Germany." However, it also shows why Ribbentrop had to be eliminated. For if he had been present at the meeting, Schmidt would not have been able to spread the word afterwards, as was already known at the time from Berchtesgaden, that "the conversation between the two statesmen had been very stormy and that Hitler had demanded nothing less than the complete dismemberment of Czechoslovakia through the cession of the Sudetenland." (Gerhard Ritter: Karl Goerdeler und die deutsche Widerstandsbewegung, Stuttgart 1954, p. 190.) This insinuation had not been made by Hitler but by Chamberlain when he asked the Chancellor whether he was aiming at the "dismemberment of Czechoslovakia." Ribbentrop's absence from this conversation thus enabled Schmidt, the sole witness, to transform Chamberlain's provocative question into a demand by Hitler and to spread it.

Chamberlain did not want war and therefore, four days later, on September 19, 1938, together with France, he issued an ultimatum to Beneš demanding the cession of the Sudeten German territories, which resulted in the complete "dismemberment of Czechoslovakia" because the remaining minorities —Poland, Hungary, and Ukraine— "naturally made similar demands" to those of the Sudeten Germans. This was Hitler's response to Chamberlain's question, emphasizing that he was not the "spokesman" for these countries, but that peace in Czechoslovakia "had already ceased to exist."

As a minor aftermath of the meeting between Hitler and Chamberlain at Obersalzberg, the British requested the minutes of the conversation, which had been taken by interpreter Schmidt. The interpreter described the fact that this one-sided transcript – Chamberlain had not brought his own interpreter – was not handed over to Henderson as Ribbentrop's "revenge." Hitler himself, however, had informed Henderson that the interpreter, Dr. Schmidt, had strict instructions not to hand over any notes he had taken on his own during state talks. The explanation given for this was: "If an exchange of such documents during talks between high-ranking personalities

If further talks are intended or desired, persons from both sides should be called in who will first make a separate record of the conversation. The German side is convinced that Chamberlain understood Hitler correctly in every respect, so that there is no room for misunderstanding. Furthermore, Hitler is prepared to repeat what he said at any time." (Files II, Doc. 522; document 532 originating from the office of the State Secretary.)

However, Chamberlain did not ask for this, as Henderson had probably received a copy of Schmidt's notes himself after he had entered his office "from time to time impatiently" to "inquire about the progress of the work." London, however, sent an official protest stating that the interpreter Schmidt, in whom "the British government had full confidence," had "taken notes during the two-and-a-half-hour conversation... Next time, they would have to bring their own man." (Files II, Docs. 522, 532, 537, and 544.) But when Chamberlain spoke with Hitler without Ribbentrop one day after the Munich Conference, he again did not bring his own interpreter, relying instead on Dr. Schmidt, whom the prime minister knew to be a member of the conspiracy.

Sir Horace Wilson's memorandum of September 16, 1938, on Chamberlain's trip to Berchtesgaden

In Berchtesgaden, there was another, much more serious aftermath than this protocol issue. Chamberlain spent the evening with his companions Sir Horace Wilson, Strang from the Foreign Office, and Henderson at the Hotel Berchtesgadener Hof, where the interpreter Schmidt also stayed. (Schmidt, p. 398.) It can be assumed that other opponents of Hitler were also staying there and, given the circumstances, were able to hold talks with the British guests without arousing suspicion. The next day, Sir Horace Wilson drew up a transcript dated September 16, 1938, and marked "Somewhere over Germany," of the conversations he had had as Chamberlain's confidant with various Germans. (DBFP U, No. 897.) These men included the German ambassador in London, Dirksen, Weizsäcker, and Schmidt. Eight days earlier, Weizsäcker had urged the British in his secret message to take a firm

public statement forcing Hitler to back down on the Sudeten question in order to bring about the fall of the German government through such a diplomatic defeat. Now he and his fellow conspirators were devastated that Chamberlain's arrival had prevented Halder and Witzleben's preparations to trap Hitler and that peace had been "virtually saved." (Weizsäcker, p. 183.)

The group around Weizsäcker was very impressed by the "statecraft" of the Prime Minister, as they called his flight to Germany. They made no secret of their admiration to Sir Horace Wilson and expressed their high regard for "this kind of 'politics,' which they regarded as a bold masterstroke of diplomacy." (X) = (DBFP I, No. 897.) Wilson further learned from Dirksen that the German delegation at Obersalzberg, including legal advisor Gaus, had prepared thoroughly to negotiate "practical matters" concerning the handover of the Sudeten German territories. Wilson notes this in a rather mocking manner, although Chamberlain had telegraphed Hitler as the reason for his surprise visit that he hoped to find a "peaceful solution" to the Sudeten question together with him. (Feiling: The Life of Neville Chamberlain, p. 363.) But Chamberlain's "master stroke" was not only intended to gain time and test the German conspirators' worth, but also to provide himself with an alibi for peace before the world, exactly what Ribbentrop had warned against in "A 5522."

Even before Hitler's conversation with Chamberlain – probably on the journey from Munich to the Berghof – Weizsäcker had said to Sir Horace Wilson: This visit "must succeed"! The State Secretary emphasized the word "must" so strongly that the pencil tip Wilson was writing with would not have been able to withstand the pressure if it had accurately reflected the degree of "emphasis." By the success of Chamberlain's visit, Weizsäcker meant nothing less than the success of the coup in Germany. During the two-hour drive back from Berchtesgaden to Munich, Wilson had another opportunity to speak with Weizsäcker during a "break" and a change of seats. Weizsäcker, like the others, said that a German-Czech war "might be too much for Hitler," but that the prime minister had "made such an impression on the chancellor that he would hesitate." The same tactic was therefore pursued as on May 21, i.e., presenting Germany as determined to go to war, but only deterred by the strong stance

England's retreat. Chamberlain had come to Berchtesgaden without Halifax, who always accompanied him to Paris and Rome, in order to be able to more easily sideline the inconvenient Ribbentrop. This is evident from the deliberations of Henderson, Weizsäcker, Schmidt, and Kordt. Horace Wilson then complained in his memorandum about the German foreign minister, who, unlike the others, had not been impressed by the prime minister's "great task" for peace. Wilson therefore instructed Ambassador

Henderson to convince Göring as soon as possible of the "importance" of Chamberlain's mission. (DBFP II, No. 897.) Chamberlain was satisfied with his trip, during which at least his "alter ego," Sir Horace Wilson, had established personal contact with the conspiratorial circles, as Wilson's memorandum proves. Chamberlain wrote to his sister that Hitler was a man "who could be trusted once he had given his word." (Feiling, p. 367.) However, after his return to England, he told his colleagues: "Hitler is anomalous, unpredictable, and surrounded by bad advisers. I therefore believe that he will not be able to maintain himself in such a state of hysteria for long." (Feiling, p. 365.) Chamberlain thus pointed out to those politically privy to the plan that Hitler's imminent downfall was imminent, which the conspirators had planned for the end of September and which, in their view, would only be understood in Germany if England declared war at the same time. However, Chamberlain did not want this at any cost at this point in time. The risk is too great for him. He prefers to accept that Hitler will not be overthrown now and that Benesch will be forced to voluntarily cede the entire Sudeten region.

The political result of Chamberlain's first visit to Germany was Hitler's renewed demand for a referendum, while the British Prime Minister "did not care one bit whether the Sudeten Germans remained in the Reich or outside the Reich in accordance with their own wishes, but he saw enormous practical difficulties in a plebiscite." (End of the Wilson Memorandum.) Despite the Munich Agreement, Chamberlain, with the help of Weizsäcker and Henderson, succeeded in delaying and ultimately preventing the plebiscite by eliminating Ribbentrop. Following the Hitler-Chamberlain talks at Obersalzberg, Ambassador Henderson, acting on instructions, visited Field Marshal Göring in Karinhall and expressed his concern "that something rash might be done by the German side which would

Chamberlain's well-intentioned trip to Berchtesgaden would completely destroy the peace negotiations. He was particularly nervous because Hitler was alone in his mountains, with only Ribbentrop, the "yes-man," to advise him and provide him with exaggerated reports from German newspapers as his main source of information. The field marshal replied that Henderson need not worry, as Hitler had given his word that he would not take any action during the negotiations unless "something catastrophic happened." By "catastrophic," Göring meant a Czech military revolution, the overthrow of the current Prague government, the massacre of hundreds of Sudeten Germans, or the deliberate firing on German posts across the border or on refugees streaming into Germany. He told Henderson just as firmly that there could now be no other solution than self-determination for the Sudeten Germans. He, too, believed that Hitler was not bluffing and would rather risk a general war than leave the Sudeten Germans to their present fate any longer. Every day that Germany postponed action was a concession to Great Britain, as it meant that more Sudeten Germans would be killed, greater Czech military preparations could be made, and ultimately more German soldiers would have to be sacrificed. But Hitler would keep his word and take no action before the next meeting, as long as nothing catastrophic happened. (FO 371/21738, C 10046, September 17, 1938; telephone report.)

On September 19, 1938, Göring wrote a letter to Lord Londerry in response to his letter of July 18. In his letter, Göring emphasized that no one in Germany, especially none of the leading figures, wanted hostility with England.

"On the contrary, everyone is and always has been ready for an understanding with England... We have never demanded anything from England, but have always insisted on our rights. We only agree to the preservation of a strong English empire... If England would only pursue a purely English policy, I am convinced that an understanding would soon be reached, because we in no way threaten English

interests. I have always assured you that the colonial question is not a problem that would ever lead to a conflict between us... I would be happy if a strong English government would finally find the courage, despite certain opposing forces, to

possible. This is my great wish for our countries." (FO 371/21736, C 9445.)

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Like Hitler and Ribbentrop, Göring also made no secret of his disappointment with England's obstructionist policy. He often complained "bitterly about the impossibility ... of making it clear to England that Nazi Germany was sincere and full of ideals. He wanted to reach an understanding with England by any means possible, but he felt that the British attitude of incomprehension or misunderstanding would destroy all his efforts." (Sir Percy Loraine, according to statements made by Princess Helene of Romania to the Foreign Office. Ankara, July 26, 1938; his report was sent to Strang, Sargent, and Henderson, as well as to Oliphant and Creswell. FO 371/21663, C 7519.) But this report contained another reference to Göring. In his conversation with Princess Helene of Romania, he "never mentioned the name of the Führer, but spoke only of what he would do in this or that case..." (ibid.). Göring's attitude was followed with great interest in England, because there was hope that he could be drawn to the side of Hitler's opponents. That is why Creswell wrote in his own hand on one of these reports that Göring was "working out a plan with a view to succeeding Hitler." (FO 371/21665, C 13642, November 10, 1938.) The conspirators led the Chamberlain government to believe that Göring had defected.

Chamberlain's pressure on Benesch

Chamberlain's pressure on Benesch

On September 18, 1938, Daladier and Bonnet met with Chamberlain and Halifax in London. The general referendum in the Sudeten region proposed by Hitler was rejected by the four, as it would have given Germany "only a welcome tool for future upheavals." (Hoare, p. 280.) The British complained about France's moral disunity and its "total lack of willingness to fight." (Feiling, p. 368.) The French aversion to a military conflict to preserve Czechoslovakia suited Chamberlain very well, as he was trying by all means to prevent a Czech-German war. Therefore, a joint message was drafted and sent to Benesch, stating that the Sudeten German territories could no longer remain within Czechoslovakia without endangering European peace. A transfer of territory "as the result of a referendum" was not ruled out.

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Contrary to Hitler's wishes, "annexation" was advised against. Instead, the British government would be prepared, as a contribution to the pacification of Europe, to "join in an international guarantee of the new borders of the Czechoslovak state against unprovoked attack." (File II, Doc. 523.) This proposal had not been discussed at Obersalzberg. The Anglo-French note handed over to Benes on September 19, 1938, was also drafted without consulting the German government.

Benesch had to recognize that the Western powers had "abandoned" him and threatened, as Henderson writes, to establish direct contacts with Hitler. Initially, the Czechoslovak president rejected the British

plan on September 20. But since Prague could not hope for Russian help because Poland would never have allowed Bolshevik troops to march through its territory, Czech Prime Minister Hodza told the French envoy: "If you formally declare that you will not help us, then we are prepared to comply." (Freund, p. 160.) The French envoy in Prague was then authorized to issue the statement already proposed by Henderson, "that a rejection of the Anglo-French proposal would mean the end of the Franco-Czech alliance. France would then not march." (Freund, op. cit.) Despite his military alliance with Czechoslovakia, Daladier had thus taken a clear position. Chamberlain, on the other hand, informed Beneš, who had never withdrawn his partial mobilization of May 21, that he was of course free to "take any measures he might later deem necessary." (DBFP I, No. 191.) This ambiguous advice from the British prime minister was intended not only to make Benes' decision easier, but also to keep him on England's side, as it was essential to prevent him from reaching an agreement with Hitler at all costs. Benes called the Anglo-French intervention a "kind of ultimatum" that allowed him to cede the Sudeten German territories "without prior approval from parliament." (DBFP II, No. 1007, point 6.) On September 21, 1938, with great bitterness and only at the "extreme urging" of England and France, Benesch accepted the Anglo-French proposals and regretted that his proposed arbitration procedure had not been accepted. On the same day, Poland demanded the return of the Teschen territories "stolen" by the Czechs in 1921 and demanded the same arrangement for the part with a Polish population as had been granted to the Sudeten Germans.

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After further German-English talks had been agreed upon at Obersalzberg, Chamberlain announced on September 19, 1938, again on his own initiative, that he would make a second visit to Germany on September 21. He arrived exactly one week after his first visit to the Obersalzberg and two weeks after Weizsäcker's secret message in Godesberg, but again without any diplomatic preparations or an agreed basis for discussion. He also appeared without Halifax. Despite the calm talks in Berchtesgaden, Chamberlain declared before his departure from London on September 20 that he would "have to fight a wild beast" and told his good friend Kingsley Wood: "It's all over!" (Feiling, p. 365; Duff Cooper, p. 298).

It is striking that Chamberlain's trips to Germany coincided with the dates on which he received important secret messages from the German conspirators. Already on August 19, 1938, after Kleist-Schmenzin's communications to Vansittart, Lord Lloyd, and Churchill, he informed the Berlin embassy that Henderson was to come to London on August 29, where he announced his intention to visit Hitler. After receiving Weizsäcker's secret message on September 8, he made a surprise appointment with Hitler for September 15, the day that had been "set for the first time for the elimination of Hitler" by the German State Secretary. (Weizsäcker, p. 193.) Erich Kordt refers to this day as "the date set for the coup." (Kordt: Wahn... ., p. 129.) Finally, Chamberlain flew to Godesberg on September 22 because the second date for Hitler's downfall had been set for September 27, and he wanted to postpone it.

Godesberg

With Benesch's agreement to voluntarily relinquish the territory in his pocket, Chamberlain began his first Godesberg talks with a view to the referendum demanded by Hitler in the Sudeten German areas. He wanted to avoid a plebiscite and agree with Hitler on the "secession of Czechoslovakia from the Reich." In all districts where the German population made up 80%, the decision was easy, but where there was a lower percentage of Germans, he was thinking of an average figure of 65%. (Files II, Doc. 562.)

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Since none of this had been discussed at Obersalzberg and Henlein had meanwhile officially announced his goal of annexing the Sudetenland to Germany, Hitler regretted that Chamberlain's plan could not be maintained. Three and a half million Germans, one million Slovaks, one million Hungarians, and 100,000 Poles had been handed over to the Czechs against their will 20 years ago. With regard to the Czechoslovak partial mobilization of May 27, which had never been revoked, Hitler went on to say: "It is known to the world that military preparations have been made on both sides of the border." He emphasized that this situation must be "finally resolved by October 1" one way or another. As in Berchtesgaden, he demanded a referendum modeled on the Saar referendum and proposed an "international control commission to supervise the vote." At the same time, he declared himself prepared to "return territories whose Czech character should be established in the plebiscite." Hitler refused to give a guarantee for the future of the rest of Czechoslovakia until all of its neighbors and all the great powers, including Italy, had done so. In assessing subsequent developments, it is important to note that Chamberlain did not demand Germany's participation in the guarantee, but had in mind the conclusion of a German-Czech non-aggression pact. Hitler also rejected this in order not to disturb friendly relations with Poland and Hungary. Finally, Hitler named as alternatives either a peaceful solution based on nationality boundaries or a military solution, with the new border to be determined by the General Staff for strategic reasons. After the Chancellor had expressly emphasized that he wanted a peaceful solution and would only consider a military one if that failed, Chamberlain replied that he was "not a negotiating partner, but only a mediator.". Through his role as mediator, he had "put his entire political career on the line." Of course, the Prime Minister had risked his career, for the English people would hardly have followed him if they had known that Chamberlain was making his policy dependent solely "on the chances of success of the existing conspiracy in Germany." (Sir Horace Wilson to Colvin in his book: The Chamberlain Cabinet, op. cit.) For this reason, only a very few people, and always the same ones, were privy to this secret policy toward Germany: Sir Horace Wilson, Vansittart, Halifax, Sargent, Strang, Roberts, Cadogan, and others, whose marginal notes can be found on almost all secret documents. After Chamberlain

When Hitler had withdrawn to Godesberg to assume his role as mediator, he asked again, "Why is a general referendum necessary at all?" The minutes of the interpreters Schmidt and Kirkpatrick, First Secretary at the British Embassy in Berlin, reveal why he rejected a legal and fair referendum with such stubbornness. The British Prime Minister resorted to a rather primitive trick, having a message passed to him during the negotiations that "Sudeten gangs, supported by the military, had invaded Eger." (DBFP II, No. 1033.) This was an alleged occupation of Asch, which had already been denied by the German government at the time and had in fact never taken place. Only Kirkpatrick's minutes note that Hitler, upon hearing the news that "12 German hostages had been shot in Eger," declared loudly that he would intervene militarily immediately "if Prague came under Communist influence or hostages were shot." Only he, and not Schmidt, states at the end that Hitler had agreed, under pressure from Chamberlain, "not to take any military action." (File I, Doc. 562 and DBFP II, No. 1033.)

Ribbentrop did not take part in this first meeting in Godesberg, which enabled the interpreter Schmidt to omit essential passages mentioned by Kirkpatrick from his minutes. Understandably, the conversation is reproduced in the English record in much stronger language than in the German minutes. This is because Kirkpatrick's notes had to be submitted to the British cabinet and were

intended to enable Chamberlain to reveal the secret of the German conspirators, if possible at that point, which would have been justified by Hitler's allegedly belligerent behavior.

After that, the tug-of-war over the referendum continued, which Hitler demanded in order to be able to "establish a just border." Chamberlain, who wanted anything but to settle the just cause of the Sudeten Germans by a vote before the eyes of the world, rejected the comparison with the Saar vote and considered the "cumbersome procedure of a large-scale referendum" of the Sudeten Germans unnecessary. Finally, Chamberlain became aggressive and declared that Hitler could only obtain the friendship with England that he desired if he used peaceful means. Now there is hardly a more peaceful means than a referendum under international supervision, which Hitler proposed but which Chamberlain constantly rejected.

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rejected. The prime minister repeatedly rejected the Reich Chancellor's offer for two reasons: 1. He wanted to prevent Hitler from gaining prestige through an internationally monitored referendum. 2. A plebiscite in the Sudetenland would have set a precedent for other oppressed national minorities in the Benesch state and led to the complete dismemberment of Czechoslovakia.

After Chamberlain had stubbornly rejected Hitler's desired peaceful means of a referendum, he telegraphed to London: "First meeting unsatisfactory" (Hoare: Nine Eventful Years, Düsseldorf 1955, p. 283), thus giving Halifax the cue to act from London. While the Prague government had been advised by London just four days earlier "to refrain from general mobilization as long as the talks between Germany and England were ongoing," and Berlin had also been informed of this (ADAP IL, Doc. 522), Halifax telegraphed the British ambassador Newton in Prague on the evening of September 22 that the French and British governments "could no longer assume responsibility for advising the Czech government not to mobilize." (DBFP II, No. 1027.) This double refusal authorized Beneš to order general mobilization. Newton was not allowed to make this announcement "before 9 p.m. on September 23." This gave Chamberlain time for his propaganda against Germany. He wanted to prevent a German-Czech war, but at least take advantage of the situation and portray Hitler as belligerent. Thus, on September 23, just as on May 21, the British press reported that "aggressive" German troop movements had taken place and that Asch had been occupied, which were pure fabrications. (DBFPII, No. 191.)

The fact that the Czechs had shot German hostages made little impression on the British press. Instead, it spread the false claim that the negotiations in Godesberg had been "definitively broken off." (Henderson: Failure ...., p. 156.) However, Kirkpatrick's minutes reveal what Dr. Schmidt's account omits, namely that Hitler and Chamberlain had agreed on the evening of September 22 to continue the discussion the following day. Chamberlain, however, postponed the meeting scheduled for the morning of September 23 without any valid reason and instead wrote a letter from the Hotel Petersberg to the Reich Chancellor at the Hotel Dreesen in Godesberg. In this letter, the Prime Minister again emphasized that he saw no need for a

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to hold a referendum in the Sudeten German areas, even though he was certain that the Czech government would be prepared to "accept" Hitler's proposal for a plebiscite. (ADAP II, Doc. 572.) This assertion was untrue, since Benesch had rejected a plebiscite as a "breakup of the state."

Chamberlain ended his letter with another untruth, claiming that, in accordance with his agreement with Hitler, he had urged the Czech government the previous evening "to do everything in its power to maintain calm and order." (ADAP II, Doc. 572.) In reality, he had informed the Prague government through Halifax that it could now take any mobilization measures it wished.

In his reply of the same day, Hitler again emphasized that referendums must be held in the Sudeten German areas, either under "international commissions or a mixed German-Czech commission." (ADAP I, Doc. 573.) Since he accepted all British demands except those of leaving the Sudetenland unprotected and renouncing the plebiscite, Chamberlain realized in Godesberg that it would not be so easy to burden Hitler with a diplomatic defeat that would have justified his removal from power in the eyes of the German people. The Prime Minister therefore replied immediately and asked Hitler for a "memorandum containing his proposals together with a map showing the areas proposed for transfer, in which the intended plebiscite was to take place." (ADAP II, Doc. 574.) Chamberlain, who wanted to convey this memorandum to Benesch, demanded from Hitler a "renewed assurance that no military action would be taken by the German side" and at the same time announced his departure.

Chamberlain's attitude on September 23, 1938, was full of insincerity. While he again committed Hitler to refrain from any military action as long as the German-British negotiations were ongoing, he sent a telegram to Newton on the afternoon of September 23 on his own behalf, stating that he could now inform Benesch that he had a free hand to take any military measures. Two hours later, "The following from the Prime Minister personally" was telegraphed from Godesberg to Newton in Prague, i.e., Newton was authorized to finally inform Beneš that England and France were giving him the go-ahead to announce general mobilization. However, Newton was to add on behalf of Chamberlain:

"The Czechoslovak government must be aware that its mobilization may well result in an immediate order to the German army to attack Czechoslovakia." (DBFP II, No. 1049 and 1052.)

Chamberlain was therefore playing with the outbreak of war, as he was fully aware of the consequences of a general mobilization in Czechoslovakia. Since May 21, Henderson had repeatedly warned against repeating such a provocation, because Hitler would immediately respond with an invasion of the Sudeten German territories. May 2 had also been of the utmost importance to the conspirators. However, unlike the British ambassador, they were pushing for a renewed open challenge in order to inflict further loss of prestige on Hitler. With his instruction to Benesch to announce general mobilization, Chamberlain effectively gave the signal for the coup. Both the Czech president and the British prime minister calculated that Hitler would respond to the provocations in Prague with military countermeasures. The German conspirators had repeatedly promised to use this as an opportunity to strike against Hitler.

As soon as the prime minister received word at Petersberg that the Czech government would announce its mobilization "immediately," he changed his travel plans. He did not return to England, but remained at Petersberg for a whole day and night and asked Hitler for another meeting on the evening of September 23. He wanted to gauge the reaction of the Chancellor and the conspirators personally. He had flown to Germany on his own initiative for the second time, not only in his capacity as head of the British government, but also as a "lifeline" for the German revolutionaries, in order to find out what these Germans expected of him and to what extent he could rely on them.

In addition to Kirkpatrick and interpreter Schmidt, Ribbentrop, Weizsäcker, Sir Horace Wilson, and

Henderson also took part in this second Godesberg meeting on September 23, 1938. When Hitler was informed shortly after the meeting began that Benesch had announced the general mobilization of Czechoslovakia on the radio, he informed the British. Chamberlain seemed "extremely concerned" and remarked that the general mobilization in Prague, which he himself had authorized six hours earlier, was now an "event that had come to pass."

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was about to happen, which he had long feared." When Hitler replied that "the Czechs' mobilization would naturally force him to take countermeasures, but that he must point out that the Czechs had mobilized first," Chamberlain denied this. He defended the Czech general mobilization as an understandable "precautionary and defensive measure" and simply claimed that Germany had "mobilized first." Without having read the German memorandum containing proposals for an amicable settlement, which he had requested and which had been handed to him at the beginning of the meeting, Chamberlain finally asked whether its contents were Hitler's "last word." When Hitler said yes, the prime minister said that "there was no point in continuing the discussion." His efforts—for which Hitler had thanked him at the beginning of the meeting—had "failed, but his conscience was clear!"

In his "Memoirs," Weizsäcker admires the tactics of the British head of government, who "spoke without tricks, like a legally trained businessman and in parliamentary style." (p. 186) However, Chamberlain, who was trained in parliamentary politics, had failed to realize that he had not yet officially acknowledged the German memorandum, which he had undoubtedly been aware of for some time through his German friends. This prompted Ribbentrop to remark dryly that the memorandum, which had been drawn up at the request of the British, contained German proposals for a peaceful solution to the Czech problem and that it would be "a completely new negotiating procedure if the Prime Minister now claimed, without knowledge of the memorandum, that Germany had not proposed a peaceful solution." Chamberlain then asked Hitler whether his reply that the Czech general mobilization would force him to take countermeasures meant "an invasion of German territory by the Czechs." Hitler said, "No, of course not." For he would stick to his agreement not to attack Czechoslovakia during the negotiations. (Kirkpatrick's notes.) After this renewed assurance, Chamberlain agreed to forward the German memorandum to Benes. Although he had not yet officially read it, he also objected to the evacuation dates of September 26 and 28 and claimed that the memorandum was "in form an ultimatum and not a document for negotiation." The Führer replied that the "German document was a memorandum and not an ultimatum." (Schmidt's minutes.)

In Godesberg, Chamberlain proved to be extremely "tricky."

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Firstly, he called the memorandum he himself had requested an "ultimatum," and secondly, he committed the German Chancellor to inaction while giving Benesch free rein for his war measures. After a break in negotiations requested by the British, Hitler agreed to drop the surrender dates of September 26 and 28, which Chamberlain had objected to, and to agree on October 1. Although Hitler had conceded almost everything to the British, Chamberlain declared that in his role as "mediator" he could neither accept nor reject the memorandum. At the end of the meeting, he expressed his satisfaction with the "relationship of trust that had developed between him and the Führer" and took his leave at around 1:45 a.m. on September 24 with a "Warm farewell!"

The German and British protocols (Files II, Doc. 583; DBFP II, No. 1073) were not exchanged, as was

customary, which Hitler pointed out in Berchtesgaden when he refused to accept the one-page protocol from Dr. Schmidt.

The fact that the Godesberg negotiations did not take the course that Germany and the world had expected is Chamberlain's fault. He did not want peace, but openly sought to inflict a diplomatic defeat on Hitler through the failure of the conference or to provoke him into occupying the Sudeten region by means of the Czech general mobilization. This was precisely the alternative desired by the conspirators in order to carry out the coup in Berlin. Today, there is little doubt that they met at Petersberg on September 23, Chamberlain's day off. Men such as Weizsäcker, Kordt, and interpreter Schmidt were able to hold talks with Chamberlain and his entourage unhindered and without attracting particular attention.

After Chamberlain's return on September 25, 1938, Prague Radio broadcast a manifesto declaring that the "Czech mobilization had been carried out with the knowledge, advice, and consent of the British and French governments." (ADAP I, Doc. 600.) Ribbentrop demanded that Henderson comment on these revelations. The ambassador immediately declared "officially and categorically for transmission to the Führer that both allegations were false." Chamberlain, however, never denied the Czech manifesto. The British press spared the prime minister, who had been out of the country at the decisive moment. Only Garvin wrote about

The Czech general mobilization of September 23, 1938, in the Observer: "The person responsible for this is to blame for the fact that the English attitude toward history is not entirely clear." Chamberlain was the culprit because he had personally authorized the Czech general mobilization.

Referring back to Godesberg, Hitler told Guderian at the end of October 1938 that he had recognized his English interlocutors there as dishonest. They did not want "sincere reconciliation." (Guderian: Memoirs of a Soldier, Heidelberg 1951, p. 52£.) Despite the concessions Hitler had made on the Rhine and although he had left Czech provocations—the shooting of hostages and general mobilization—unanswered, the British cabinet rejected the German memorandum on September 24, 1938, because Hitler's supposedly "new" demands were unacceptable. (Hoare: Nine Years..., p. 285.) On September 25 and 26, Daladier and Bonnet were informed in London about the results of the Godesberg talks, but they were misinformed! The Prime Minister claimed that he wanted to urge Hitler once again to allow the transfer of the Sudeten German territories "to be settled by an international commission. If he refused this urgent request, Sir Horace Wilson was to tell him that France and we would fight on the side of Czechoslovakia." (Duff Cooper: That Cannot Be Forgotten, p. 303.) This was simply untrue, for Hitler had, as is well known, proposed of his own accord at Godesberg and insisted until the end of the meeting on September 24 that the vote should take place under the supervision of an international commission, after Chamberlain had rejected a German-Czech commission. This was also officially stated in point 5 of the German memorandum. At the same time as misinforming the French statesmen and the British cabinet, Chamberlain issued a communiqué stating that England and Russia would support the French government in the struggle for Czechoslovakia, even though Daladier and Bonnet had shown no enthusiasm for war. The Russians described Chamberlain's communiqué as a forgery, since they had not been asked at all. Nevertheless, on the same day, the British Prime Minister mobilized the English fleet and ramped up war propaganda. In doing so, he followed the advice of Erich Kordt, who, aware of British impotence, had recommended "emphasizing the military strength and financial power of the Empire and, if necessary, putting the German government under severe pressure."

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" England should bluff, and Chamberlain followed the advice of the German conspirators.

On September 25, 1938, an important ministerial conference took place in London. Here Chamberlain asked himself whether war should break out now or later, leading to the elimination of Hitler. This shows that Weizsäcker's secret message of September 8 was discussed in wider circles and that the British leadership had been informed of Hitler's imminent downfall. Now Duff Cooper also realized that Chamberlain was taking into account a "completely new factor" in his policy toward Germany, namely the "inadequacy" of German military preparations, which the conspirators constantly emphasized, and the "deep dissatisfaction and conspiracy of the German generals against Hitler." (Duff Cooper, p. 314.) Nothing was concealed from the allies either. Gamelin, for example, knew of von Weizsäcker's offer on September 16, and Washington and Paris had already been informed of Kleist-Schmenzin's secret information on August 26. Of course, the leading men in Prague were also aware of all the secret German-English connections. Otto Strasser, who had broken with Hitler in the early 1930s and later went into exile, learned during his stay in Switzerland in August 1938 "from senior German officers the details of the action plan, including that General Hoepner was to move the Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler from Munich to Berlin." (Rönnefarth, vol. 1, p. 504.) Benesch was immediately informed of this, and Foreign Minister Krofta informed all Czech legations. With this information, Benesch had the general mobilization order ready. p. 504£.) Benesch was immediately informed of this, and Foreign Minister Krofta notified all Czech legations. Armed with this information, Benesch ordered general mobilization and rejected the German memorandum. In doing so, he supported Chamberlain's intentions to allow the conspirators to carry out their coup.

On September 26, 1938, Hitler gave a speech at the Sportpalast in Berlin in which he commented on the new situation that had arisen as a result of the British and Czech rejection of the German memorandum. Among other things, he mentioned French Aviation Minister Pierre Cot, who had written in the News Chronicle on July 14, 1938, that England and France needed Czechoslovakia "because it is from this state that the German economy and German industry can most easily be destroyed with bombs." (DdP 6/1, p. 340.) Finally, Hitler said about the Godesberg Memorandum that it contained nothing other than the realization of what England and France had already been "promised" by Benesch on September 19:

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"The territory that is German according to its people and wants to be part of Germany according to its will shall become part of Germany, and not only when Mr. Benesch has succeeded in expelling perhaps one or two million Germans, but now, immediately... This territory shall be placed under German sovereignty because it is essentially populated by Germans. However, I will leave the final demarcation of the border to the vote of the people living there! I have therefore decided that a vote should take place in this area... I am now prepared, and have always been prepared, to allow a vote to be held throughout the entire area. However, Mr. Benesch and his friends—Chamberlain—opposed this. They only wanted a vote to be held in individual parts. Well, I gave in on this point. I even agreed to the

vote be verified by international control commissions." (DdP 6, I, p. 344f., Berlin 1939.)

Daladier and Bonnet, as well as the English parliamentarians, must have been astonished to realize that they had been misinformed about the Godesberg negotiations by Chamberlain, who had presented the situation as if he had only now been forced by Horace Wilson—who, incidentally, was present at the speech in the Sportpalast—to obtain Hitler's agreement to an international commission. At the end of his speech, Hitler declared: "Once the Czechs have settled their differences with their minorities, peacefully and not through oppression, I will no longer be interested in the Czech state, and that is guaranteed" (ibid.). However, since the Czechs never dealt with their minorities peacefully, but on the contrary oppressed them, the Slovaks finally declared their independence in March 1939, and Hacha, Benesch's successor, sought the protection of the German Reich.

Although Hitler had accepted all of Chamberlain's proposals with the exception of the indefinite postponement of the cession of territories, US President Roosevelt also intervened on the same day, September 26, 1938, to give the world the impression that Germany was to blame for the failure of the Godesberg talks. This is evident from his letter to the German chancellor. (File II, Doc. 632.) In his reply, Hitler referred to May 2 of that year, when Benesch, under the "completely fabricated pretext of German troop concentrations, had proceeded to mobilize his army." However, Hitler went on to write that Germany's decision at that time not to take military countermeasures had only exacerbated the intransigence of the Prague government, forcing him to announce in Nuremberg that the Sudeten Germans, "if they

cannot find justice or help on their own, must receive both from the German Reich"! He ended his letter to Roosevelt with the words that it was now up to the Czechoslovak government alone to decide "whether it wants peace or war" (ibid.). ;

Chamberlain now finally realized that he could not force a diplomatic defeat on Hitler in the Sudeten question, and since he had never wanted to fight for Czechoslovakia, he issued an official statement on the evening of September 26 announcing that the promises made by Benesch to England and France to hand over the Sudeten region to the Reich would be "fairly and fully carried out.". England expressly committed itself to this. Chamberlain trusted that the "Reich Chancellor would not reject this proposal, which is made in the same friendly spirit in which I was received in Germany." (ADAP I, Doc. 618.) While Chamberlain, whose language had changed considerably since Godesberg and had lost all its sharpness, avoiding officially repeating the British threat demanded by the German conspirators, Halifax declared at the same time to the British press that Great Britain and Russia would certainly stand by France if "despite all the efforts made by the British Prime Minister, a German attack on Czechoslovakia should take place." (Schulthess, Europäischer Geschichtskalender [European History Calendar], vol. 79/1938, p. 314; DBFP H, No. 1111.) On the same day, Sir Horace Wilson delivered a personal letter from Chamberlain to the Chancellor in Berlin, in which there was no longer any mention of an "ultimatum" as in Godesberg, but rather of Hitler's "proposals." In it, Hitler was asked to agree to immediate German-Czech negotiations in order to "determine the path" by which the Sudeten German territory was to be "handed over" to the Reich. (ADAP II, Doc. 619, DdP 6/1, p. 348.) Hitler had proposed the same thing in vain in Godesberg.

Wilson had to tell the chancellor that "England would feel obliged to help France" if French forces got into a fight with Germany. Hitler replied that he had no intention of attacking France and that French intervention in a German-Czech conflict would therefore constitute an act of aggression that could

trigger a general war within a few days. And this was only "because Czechoslovakia refuses to accept a memorandum containing nothing more than the fulfillment of promises already made by it." (ADAP II, Doc.

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634.) Finally, Hitler declared that he had made his preparations in any case and had not spent "4½ billion on fortifying the Rhineland" for nothing. He emphasized once again that "England could not wish for a better friend than him, and that he had repeatedly expressed his desire for friendship with England in all his writings and speeches" (ibid.).

Chamberlain's "second self," Sir Horace Wilson, is said to have declared to the conspirators in Berlin on a secret mission that the second date set for Hitler's overthrow, September 27, must also be postponed. Until Wilson's return from Germany, Chamberlain still kept both options open: either to promise British help to the coup plotters in the Reich or to agree to a peaceful solution to the Sudeten German question.

That same evening, Chamberlain pointed out in the House of Commons that he could not involve "our entire empire" in a war because of a "little nation." He had thus decided to abandon Czechoslovakia to its fate. In response to Hitler's reply of the same day, in which all the arguments for accepting the German memorandum were repeated, the British Prime Minister telegraphed during the night of September 27 to 28 that he wanted to come to Berlin immediately to discuss the "terms of surrender" of the Sudeten German territories with Hitler "and the representatives of the Czech government," — whom he never received — and possibly also with representatives of France and Italy. (DdP 6/1, p. 853.)

The conspirators could not have foreseen such a sudden change in Chamberlain's attitude, although they had already experienced it once before on September 13. Without being authorized to do so, Erich Kordt disclosed the text of the Hitler-Chamberlain correspondence of September 26 and 27 to his circle, where there was no doubt that on September 28, the "long-awaited explosion would indeed take place." Witzleben's "shock troops" were ready to storm the Reich Chancellery. (Ritter: Karl Goerdeler und... .., p. 195£.) There, Erich Kordt and the deputy police president of Berlin, Count Fritz von der Schulenburg, had agreed on a "knock signal" to make sure that no precautions had been taken and that the "guards had not been reinforced." No one was denied entry to the Reich Chancellery. (Kordt: Nicht aus..., p. 270.) One day before Hitler's alleged date of attack, the following remained in the Reich Chancellery

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Everything was quiet, and even the conspirators were able to come and go unhindered. In Germany, general mobilization had not yet been ordered. In England, based on German intelligence, it was not expected until 2 p.m. on September 28. That was what Henderson had reported. The National Socialist government would have been involved in a war even then if Chamberlain had pushed for war in September 1938. However, since he had never intended to march on the Czechs, the German conspirators did not want to act without English support, and Hitler would not allow himself to suffer a diplomatic defeat, the British Prime Minister flew to Germany for the third time on September 29 at his own request.

"Military coup and Hitler's downfall very likely"

On September 28, Creswell had received the latest situation report on Germany from a friend at the Foreign Office. He wrote by hand on the Foreign Office document: "German army circles support anti-Nazi influences." Creswell described his informant as an Austrian who had lived in Berlin for four years and had contacts in German army and civil service circles. He was now awaiting naturalization as a British citizen. For some time, he had been interested in whether "members of the German General Staff and moderate circles in the German army could issue a statement against Hitler in the event of war... Then a military coup and the overthrow of Hitler would be very likely." That is why he is in contact with a wide variety of men in Germany. He also knows about the recent visit of Mr. v. K. - Kleist-Schmenzin - to England and the other previous initiatives. His plan is that

"in the event of a coup, we would be happy if peace were restored and the continued existence of a strong Germany with its current army were ensured, that we would adopt the proposals regarding Czechoslovakia in the Anglo-French plan and offer Germany concessions on colonial and economic issues. If Germany could also be promised a West African colony in the near future, this would give Hitler's military successor government the feeling that

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Brothers, and although under thirty he is, I believe, very highly thought of by the Honourable R. I. Brand, and has a great circle of acquaintances in German business and financial circles. He was four years in Berlin as a director of a syndicate for stimulating exports by barter arrangements, and in this position came into contact with leading members of important German companies such as Ärunns, I. G. Farben, etc. He also had numerous friends in German military circles. He is an Austrian and a nephew of the former Financial Under-Secretary in the Vienna Federal Chancellery, Dr. Schliller, and is now completing his fifth year before naturalization as a British subject.

He has for some time been much interested in the possibility of some stand being made by members of the German General Staff and moderate officers in the German Army against Hitler in the event of war, and he has often discussed this question with me. He is in touch with various people in Germany in this connection, and I am aware of the recent visit of Herr von K. to this country and the other initiatives which have been taken.

He came round today to see me and suggest the following plan. He thinks it is important that "before the actual outbreak of war, some message should be conveyed to the people concerned in German army circles, to the effect that, in the event of the "r&regime in Germany is overthrown by means of a coup, and an armistice is requested, the situation will not be exploited by the Western Powers to impose drastic measures on Germany. He feels that if a declaration to this effect could be made by the Government immediately after an outbreak of hostilities, it would be of great assistance in bringing about a peaceful settlement.

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From document FO 371/21664, C 11614, September 28, 1938

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that by stopping the war, it could achieve something that Hitler would not even have been able to achieve by unleashing a war.

The decisive factor in this plan, however, is that the written communiqué should be made before the outbreak of war, i.e., as soon as war can be regarded as inevitable. A suitable opportunity for such a step would have been immediately after the Prime Minister's return from Godesberg, and it seems possible that such a moment could recur immediately after the Munich negotiations." (FO 371/21664, C 11614, September 28, 1938.)

This document contains handwritten marginal notes by Sir H. Knatshbull-Hugessen, Mallet, and Sargent. These notes express the view that no British official could sign the document demanded by the conspirators before war broke out. However, after the outbreak of the conflict and the coup, the British promise to treat the German people well would "have a great effect." Of course, Chamberlain could not accept the conspirators' repeated proposal, because he did not want a German-Czech war, but rather to prevent it, and therefore he could not make a premature statement in favor of the coup after the outbreak of war. The German conspirators, however, actually believed that Chamberlain, after Hitler had been removed, would treat them favorably as the successor government and give the German people everything that he had denied the National Socialist government.

The Munich Agreement of September 29, 1938

After Chamberlain offered to fly to Germany again, Hitler invited him, Daladier, and Mussolini to a conference in Munich. The Prime Minister was accompanied by Sir Horace Wilson and William Strang, head of the European Department at the Foreign Office, while Daladier was accompanied by Alexis Leger, Secretary General of the French Foreign Ministry, and Roland de Margerie, who was ambassador to Bonn from 1962 to 1964. Only Mussolini came accompanied by his foreign minister, Count Ciano, in accordance with the diplomatic customs of the time. Halifax remained in London, undoubtedly to exclude the inconvenient French foreign minister Bonnet from the conference, as Bonnet wanted a "general agreement" between the

European countries, which was supposed to "save them from ruin, chaos, and the disastrous consequences of a new war." (Bonnet: Vor der..., p. 116.) The German government wanted something similar. But as is well known from Wilson's memorandum, the British weren't ready to get into "practical" discussions with the Germans. In Godesberg, too, Chamberlain avoided any planning for the distant future and concentrated on preventing a plebiscite in the Sudetenland and provoking a serious incident through the Czech general mobilization he had authorized. (DBFP I, No. 897, No. 1049 and 1052.)

Even before the meeting in Munich, there were intrigues against Ribbentrop, who was accused of wanting to "submit his own plan" that went beyond Hitler's proposals. (Henderson: Failure ..., p. 167.) During the preparations, efforts were made to hand over the peace plans to Mussolini rather than Hitler. According to the interpreter Schmidt, Göring, Neurath, and the Italian ambassador Attolico had therefore already met in Berlin to work out German proposals for negotiations "without Ribbentrop's knowledge," which Mussolini was to present as his own in Munich. (Süddeutsche Zeitung, October 23, 1963.) Erich Kordt testified similarly on June 4, 1948, before the Military Court, stating that Weizsäcker had "called Neurath and Göring before the Munich Conference and worked out a short note together with them." Göring then presented this draft to Hitler, who glanced at it briefly and said "that he might approve it." Kordt had the draft translated into French by the interpreter Schmidt, and Weizsäcker gave the document to Attolico, who passed it on to Mussolini before the conference. When

Mussolini then "to the great surprise of Ribbentrop and the others present, presented the German draft as his own proposal," which was accepted, according to Kordt, "the entire Munich Conference was conducted on the basis" of an alleged proposal by the Italian head of government. (ADAP I, note 1 to Doc. 670.) In reality, the so-called "Italian proposals" were not drafted by Weizsäcker, Neurath, and Göring, but by the Foreign Office. They are part of the first draft of the "Program for the Munich Meeting." (ADAP II, Doc. 669.) Since this draft still bears the heading "German Demands," but Hitler changed this title to "German Proposals" in Godesberg at Chamberlain's request,

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The outdated term is probably the only contribution made by the German State Secretary.

"Responding to violence with violence"

Until the last day before the Munich Conference, the British government was inundated with news from the circle of conspirators. On September 29, 1938, Vansittart drafted a memorandum on information that Colonel Christie had received from a German friend. In it, the situation in Germany was described as follows:

"At midnight, the mobilization of the British fleet in Berlin became known and caused great alarm ... Since then, Hitler & Co. have begun their retreat. However much they may bluff, they are ready to give in. Public opinion against Hitler and the Nazis has grown extraordinarily strong in the last few days, despite the German people's ignorance of events abroad. Hitler's speech in the Sportpalast has done him great harm. I ask you to remain firm on all points. Continue your radio broadcasts in Germany in a dignified and firm manner, announcing the British conditions and the guarantees for the Sudeten Germans and emphasizing that now the only pretext for war is the time limit. Luxembourg and Strasbourg have done a magnificent job, but British radio must strongly emphasize the English mobilization." (FO 371/21664, C 11164, September 29, 1938.)

This situation within Germany was confirmed by a well-known German industrialist who claimed that "hundreds of Germans are saying to each other that they would rather fight for the British than for these Nazi pigs." This German industrialist also called for British strength to be emphasized and declared: "Do not give in and do not give Hitler victory after you have so successfully damaged him over the last 48 hours." And the night before, Goerdeler had also demanded by telephone:

"Don't give an inch. Hitler is in a very difficult position. Make sure that responsibility for any use of force is placed on his shoulders... Hitler may be more yielding tomorrow. If not, I still say, hold your position. Don't let yourself be intimidated. If those responsible friends within Germany cannot bring him down before he starts the war, he will not be able to hold out for more than two weeks." When asked whether initial success on the battlefield could change everything, Goerdeler replied: "No, not even then."

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When asked about our radio broadcasts, Goerdeler replied: "Excellent! Continue with your determination, but use mild language. Talk about Roosevelt, Chamberlain's efforts and proposals, but also about the British and French mobilization, and explain that violence must be met with violence." (FO 371/21664.)

Chamberlain did not want the general conference and arms limitation demanded by the German conspirators, but he accepted the phrase "responding to violence with violence." This was not a flash of English inspiration, but came from the box of tricks of the German traitor Goerdeler. Finally, on the day of the British delegation's conference in Munich, Halifax telegraphed:

"Information reached me this evening at 9:30 p.m. from moderate circles in Germany that the firm stance of the British government, mainly the mobilization of the fleet, has been extremely effective over the last few days. This was made known to wide circles in Germany by radio broadcasts in German from England, Luxembourg, and Strasbourg." (FO 371/21664, September 29, 1938.)

During the so-called peace conference, the "moderate" Germans, i.e., the conspirators, demanded that England remain firm toward Germany and at the same time emphasize the strength of the Empire and America's friendship. Chamberlain was to bluff and pretend to be ready for a war desired by Hitler. This would justify the conspirators in risking an assassination attempt on Hitler—or so they believed.

Chamberlain's Anglo-German Declaration

All these appeals from the German conspiracy circle probably prompted Chamberlain to ask Neurath on the night after the Munich Conference to "arrange a meeting with the Führer alone, without Ribbentrop, for the next day, as he still had a proposal to make." Neurath, then President of the Secret State Council, explained in Nuremberg: "The Führer did not want this at first, but I finally persuaded him to agree." (IMT XVI, p. 708.)

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The "English-German Declaration" reads as follows:

September 30, 1938

"We, the German Führer and Chancellor and the British Prime Minister, had another meeting today and agree that the question of German-British relations is of the utmost importance for both countries and for Europe.

We regard the agreement signed yesterday evening and the German-British naval agreement as symbolic of the desire of our two peoples never again to wage war against each other.

We are determined that consultation shall be the method by which any other questions that may arise between our two countries shall be dealt with, and we are determined to continue our efforts to remove any causes of disagreement in order to contribute in this way to securing peace in Europe."

ADOLF HITLER NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN

The original text of this statement is in English and has no heading. The date is in Chamberlain's handwriting. (ADAPII, Doc. 676.)

According to Laurence Thompson (The Greatest Betrayal, p. 252), Chamberlain had William Strang draft this statement on the morning of September 30, 1938, and changed very little. Ribbentrop had

been excluded from this final Munich meeting at Chamberlain's request, so that Hitler was dependent only on the interpreter Schmidt and his translation. Without diplomatic protection – Bismarck on Wilhelm I after Benedetti's visit to Ems in 1870 – the Chancellor signed the document brought by Chamberlain – written on Foreign Office paper – because he believed it confirmed England's desire for peace. In reality, Chamberlain only wanted to secure another "peace alibi," which Ribbentrop had already warned against in A 5522 after Halifax's so-called peace mission in November 1937.

The commentary by Alexander Frederick Douglas Home (later Sir Douglas Home), who traveled to Munich as Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, is very noteworthy. He made revealing statements to his biographer Kenneth Young about the background to the Munich Conference and the Chamberlain-Hitler Declaration of September 30, 1938:

"An agreement was signed... But that was not the end. Chamberlain wanted a separate Anglo-German declaration of their mutual peaceful intentions. Douglas Home calls this

a calculated part of the Prime Minister's tactics. He remembers Chamberlain at the breakfast table the next morning, September 30. He had drafted a document in the hope of seeing Hitler again before leaving Munich. Chamberlain took the document with him to Hitler's apartment, and Hitler signed it with suspicious willingness. Douglas knows that Chamberlain simply wanted to reach an agreement that, regardless of whether Hitler kept it or not, would be a resounding success (bull point) in the United States and in terms of general public opinion. If Hitler broke the agreement, it would show the whole world without contradiction that he was completely unreliable, and then there would be nothing left but war. "Basically, the scrap of paper was just window dressing," Chamberlain told Douglas, "but I will give it the maximum publicity." The prime minister had no confidence in Hitler's signature; he had merely gained a tactical advantage. But back in England, Chamberlain's calculation failed him (p. 54). As huge crowds cheered and shouted in Downing Street, those around him urged him to appear at the window of No. 10 and say something about peace in our time. He refused. But then, more to disperse the crowd, he suddenly appeared on the balcony and heard himself say the following words: This is the second time in our history that peace has returned to Downing Street with honor from Germany. I believe it is peace in our time. Douglas knows that Chamberlain bitterly regretted his words because they were completely uncharacteristic. A week later, he asked the House of Commons not to attach too much importance to these words, which were spoken in a moment of excitement after a long and exhausting day.

The ink on the Munich Agreement was barely dry, the applause had barely died away, when Douglas' services to his boss were put to an even greater test. While Chamberlain retained his popularity as a peacemaker in the country—although it waned as Hitler's aggression became bolder—he was confronted in Parliament with the hatred of the opposition and also of some 30-40 British Conservatives. The leaders of this splinter party—the Party Cave—were Churchill, Eden, Cranborne (later Lord Salisbury), L. S. Amery, and Duff Cooper, who had resigned as First Lord of the Admiralty after the Munich Agreement. (Kenneth Young, Sir Alec Douglas Home, London 1970, p. 53.)

Duff Cooper took Chamberlain's peace declaration as an opportunity to resign, as it meant that England would never again go to war with Germany. Three days later, the Prime Minister reassured him and described the Anglo-German desire never to fight each other again as merely an "opinion" he had expressed during a completely "non-binding" conversation.

Five days after the conference, on October 5, he declared in the House of Commons: "I have never thought of trying to save peace by disarmament." (Hoare, p. 294.) He even urged the French to abandon the 40-hour week, arguing that it would prevent France from pushing ahead with rearmament. Feiling calls Chamberlain's passionate pursuit of rearmament and his simultaneous negotiations with Germany the Prime Minister's "double policy," which was supposed to help him navigate the pitfalls of the "terrible year of 1938." In reality, however, Chamberlain's double policy consisted of conducting official negotiations with the Reich government on the one hand and maintaining secret connections with the German conspiracy against the Reich government on the other.

Chamberlain's Munich was nothing more than one of the "tactical interludes of understanding" that Ribbentrop had already presented to Hitler as a probability in the "Conclusions" of January 2, 1938. According to Gerhard Ritter's formulation, the German conspirators spun "a thousand threads – thin strands of twine" that were intended to "entangle Hitler in a web." (Ritter, p. 200.) By the turn of 1937/38, Ribbentrop already saw through the future British policy and its intention to one day bring Germany to its knees. There was only one thing he could not see, namely that Chamberlain was supported by German men in high official positions who sought to remove Hitler, even at the cost of a severe defeat for Germany. (Schlabrendorff, Offiziere gegen Hitler, 1st edition, p. 38.)

It was not the decisions of the Reich government, which were the same in Godesberg and Munich, but rather waiting for the right moment to brand Hitler as "completely unreliable" before the world that had become decisive for Chamberlain's thinking and actions (Sir Douglas Home). After the Munich Conference, Henderson requested a transfer and recommended that "the Germans themselves should get rid of Hitler and that England should not interfere further in internal German affairs." (DBFP II, p. 615.) Unlike Frangois-Poncet, whose wish to be transferred to Rome was granted, Henderson was not allowed to give up his post in Berlin and admits that after his leave from October 1938 to spring 1939, he "would never have returned to Berlin if he had been a free man." (Henderson, Failure ... p. 171.)

For the German traitors, the elimination of the Reich government had become a matter of life and death, had they

into the hands of the British government. Kleist-Schmenzin said in London that he had embarked on his journey there with a "noose around his neck." Vansittart and Churchill recorded the fact of the intended German "putsch" in writing in their memoranda for Chamberlain, and Henderson reported quite openly from the Nuremberg party congress about the "betrayal" in the Foreign Office. Stevenson wrote from Bern about Weizsäcker's "extremely dangerous double game," and Colvin revealed that the secret message from the German State Secretary to Halifax on September 7 "had created a situation at 10 Downing Street that made it necessary to convene the entire cabinet." (DBFP II, pp. 686-690, Colvin, Vansittart....p. 237.) In view of these facts, which prove the direct and immediate influence of the German secret reports on British policy, it seems incomprehensible that historians and biographers today still ignore the responsibility of the traitors for the outbreak of World War II or even claim that the British government paid little attention to the reports of its German agents.

François-Poncet: Criminal folly to rely on enemies of the regime!

In the fall of 1938, François-Poncet concluded his diplomatic mission in Berlin to take up the post of

ambassador in Rome. He left Berlin on October 28 and traveled on from Paris to Rome on November 6. During this time, he had breakfast with his wife at the British Embassy and was a guest of Sir Eric Phipps, Vansittart's brother-in-law. Phipps reported to Halifax what François-Poncet had told him about recent events:

"Hitler decided immediately after May 21 to eradicate this insult, if necessary by force of arms. At the beginning of June, this was confirmed to François-Poncet by high-ranking German officers, who stated that enormous efforts were being made to strengthen the German western front as much as possible with the intention of attacking Czechoslovakia in September. He kept the French government informed of these German activities and intentions. This makes the French intransigence throughout August all the more strange and indeed mysterious. On the morning of September 27, when war seemed almost inevitable, François-Poncet requested an immediate meeting with Hitler. But the precious minutes passed and no reply came from the Reich Chancellery. He then sent his military attaché to

German General Staff to inform them of the contents of the message for the Führer and to add that approximately 90% of Godesberg's demands would in fact be granted... After several hours, François-Poncet finally heard that Hitler would receive him at 11:30 a.m.... Göring and Neurath left Hitler's room as François-Poncet entered...

During the meeting, only Ribbentrop was present, more aggressive and unpleasant than ever. Hitler began to shout and preach. Ribbentrop, far from calming him down, seemed to want to provoke him. François-Poncet brought a map with him on which the enormous concessions to be made to Germany were marked in bright colors... Suddenly, Hitler was called to the telephone in another room. Alone with Ribbentrop, François-Poncet attacked him and told him what a terrible responsibility rested on his shoulders. After a quarter of an hour, Hitler returned and said calmly that Mussolini had called him and that a 24-hour postponement of mobilization had been agreed upon. On his way out, François-Poncet saw a table set for 40 people. It was for the officers with whom the Führer wanted to speak before they left for the Czech front. Under the seal of secrecy, François-Poncet told me that throughout August and half of September, he had received continuous messages from army emissaries and even officers urging France to remain firm and unyielding, explaining that in the event of war, the Nazi regime would collapse. Frangois-Poncet never informed his government of this information. He felt that its source would make them suspicious and could strengthen the warmongers in France and Benesch & Co. However, he admitted that his omissions 'weighed heavily on his conscience'. Nevertheless, he assured me earnestly that he would always act in the same way because he was convinced that it would have been criminal folly to attach undue importance to communications from enemies of the regime.

Frangois-Poncet seems to believe that he and Henderson would have been held hostage by Hitler in the event of war... When they parted in Berchtesgaden, the Führer and he spoke quite frankly and even joked together. François-Poncet remarked that Hitler would not get rid of him because he would remain 'in the axis', which made Hitler laugh heartily... François-Poncet believes that Hitler really wants a general settlement. The chancellor seems to have been standing behind the curtain when troops marched through Wilhelmstraße on one of those fateful days at the end of September. He expected huge crowds to demand his appearance – "We want our Führer" – but there were no shouts, only a stony silence. Now he will realize that his people want peace. Let us therefore act while the iron is hot... He is not interested in offers of colonies.

After the bloodbath of June 1934, Frangois-Poncet was dismissed by Hitler.

After the bloodbath of June 1934, Frangois-Poncet was

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publicly accused in the Reichstag of conspiring with Schleicher and Röhm... Now he has left Berlin, honored and respected, and I truly believe with affection... I fear that François-Poncet will have a very difficult time at first, and I hope that you will instruct Perth to help him in any way possible as soon as he arrives in Rome. He is not a 'grand seigneur', but a very decent and honorable man. His tongue can be very sharp, and he cannot suppress a 'joke', even at the risk of making an enemy... He is wholeheartedly committed to Anglo-French cooperation. Signed Eric Phipps." (FO 800/311, October 31, 1938, private and highly confidential.)

Frangois-Poncet was highly regarded by Hitler for his intelligence and wit, so that the accusations mentioned above had no consequences.

Just like Henderson, François-Poncet had been pressured by German conspirators to remain firm and unyielding on the Sudeten German question, because then the Nazi regime would collapse in the event of war. However, he did not pass this secret information on to his government, as he considered it downright criminal to attach any importance to such communications from enemies of the regime. Chamberlain, on the other hand, followed the recommendations of the conspiratorial circle in all his policies toward Germany.

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Secret messages from the conspirators to the British cabinet

The Prime Minister as Prince of Peace

Just three days after Munich, Chamberlain announced in the House of Commons that rearmament would be pursued at any price. In England, the war psychosis continued to be fueled, while in Germany everything remained calm. British consuls general in major German cities reported that all Germans were thanking the British prime minister for "preventing war." To the same extent that Chamberlain was praised as a peacemaker in the Reich after Munich, the National Socialist government was slandered. (Report by Consul General L.M. Robinson in Munich; FO 371/21665, Oct. 10/11, 1938.)

Chamberlain's visits to Germany and the Munich Agreement appeared to the German resistance movement as a defeat. All secret military preparations for Hitler's overthrow were in vain and had to be dismantled as inconspicuously as possible. To this end, the conspirators sent their couriers back to London in October 1938 to continue informing and influencing the Chamberlain government in their favor. They painted a completely false picture of the mood in Germany. Only a small, angry anti-Nazi group influenced this reporting. One reads, for example: "The party is a bunch of ignoramuses and Hitler himself is a madman." In the German radio news, "a large part of the truth is suppressed." "Chamberlain has won the hearts of the Germans." (FO 371/21665, October 10/11, 1938.) "The German army is not ready. In the event of war, Austrian soldiers will desert. In Bavaria, only 10% of the population are Nazis." (FO 371/21664, C 11195, September 30, 1938.)

Goerdeler's report of October 18, 1938, is written in the same vein and shows his great disappointment at the assassination attempt prevented by Chamberlain. Everything he reported is untrue. There is no

country left in Europe that Hitler does not want to conquer. Goerdeler's aim is to ensure that the English war preparations do not slacken. Neurath is quoted as saying: "We will inherit England like an old aunt," and Ribbentrop is said to have remarked that Chamberlain had signed "the death warrant of the British Empire" in Munich.

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Goerdeler demands that the "Western democracies intervene openly or risk a preventive war." However, he also admits that Hitler's prestige in the army "has risen enormously." (FO 371/21708, C 12655, October 18, 1938.) This was the natural consequence of the incorporation of the Sudetenland into the Reich without war, for the German General Staff had always feared the Czechoslovak fortifications as almost impregnable because they had been built according to French specifications. Vansittart sent this Goerdeler report to Halifax, noting that it was "credible" despite containing such nonsensical passages as Hitler having promised his followers in Nuremberg "an unhindered advance in the East" and that "Hitler would now pursue a merciless course toward the destruction of the Empire." Although the Goerdeler report was strictly confidential, Halifax should pass it on to some of "his colleagues, because nothing in it could reveal the source." Regarding Vansittart's comment and Goerdeler's report, Creswell of the Foreign Office wrote: "It is difficult to believe that Hitler will now pursue a merciless course toward the destruction of the British Empire. Goerdeler – Vansittart's informant – is a great anti-Nazi, and with such people, wishful thinking is very often the father of the thought." (FO 371/21708, C 12747, October 20, 1938.) Creswell recommends in a handwritten note that this report, which was considered very important in London, be used for propaganda purposes in German. Sargent, Cadogan, and Halifax read it, and R.L. Speaght noted in his handwritten margin: "We hear the same stories from all sides. People are grateful to Chamberlain and not to the Führer for preventing the war."

On October 14, 1938, Redsdale reported on his conversation with Dr. Karl Abshagen, a German press representative. According to Redsdale, Göring "appeared unnoticed by Hitler and Ribbentrop on the so-called Black Tuesday at a conference, to which he also took Neurath." As the oldest minister, he had declared "that the army was in no way capable of fighting against the United Powers and that the German people would not support the regime's policy." As a result, the mobilization order was withdrawn within a few hours. Then Chamberlain's proposal to fly to Berlin arrived. Dr. Abshagen had already told Redsdale that a tank division had rolled through Berlin without the population taking any notice of it. This had been a "terrible experience for the Führer—like

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A ghost procession! Of course, Neurath was not secretly in Berlin, nor did a tank division roll through Berlin. These were the usual fabrications designed to discredit Hitler and portray him as warmongering, whom the German people would no longer follow. Abshagen had stated that Chamberlain's reputation in Germany was extremely high and that he was "regarded as the embodiment of peace." Abshagen had advised capitalizing on these sentiments. (FO 371/21665, C 12283, October 14, 1938.)

A report published by Halifax in early November 1938 and written by Member of Parliament W. W. Astor about his trip to Germany, the Sudetenland, Czechoslovakia, and France on the internal situation in the Reich is relatively objective: All Germans he spoke to admired Chamberlain. Only the young people and the working masses supported Hitler, who had eliminated unemployment, so that there was

now actually a shortage of workers. Prices had not risen, and workers were greatly favored by the National Labor Front, "Strength Through Joy," and other organizations. Germany was indeed very socialist. Everything is being done for the working class and the youth, little for the bourgeoisie and the rich. The attitude of the army is excellent, the equipment is outstanding. Astor would consider it very unwise for England to "start a preventive war" or even to "bluff" with such a move, because it would have to reckon with a rapid shortage of raw materials in Germany. This is because the processing of coal into oil supplies the air force with gasoline, and artificial rubber can be used to make better tires than those made from the natural product. Hitler is the key to the situation and has a fantastic "flair" for anticipating future developments. Astor rejects Chamberlain's bluff and declares:

"We must never again find ourselves in a position where we threaten or promise something that we cannot fully deliver. When the situation is favorable, we must be prepared to threaten force. Our hope for peace lies in encouraging and strengthening moderate influences in Germany. We must not give the impression that we simply reject everything. It is therefore important that the Prime Minister and his cabinet make many speeches, frequently referring to the Anglo-German Declaration of Friendship of September 30, 1938, as the unshakeable basis for future negotiations, and declare our willingness to enter into arms parity, while emphasizing that our rearmament is not intended for revenge and that we are prepared to

to stop at a negotiated point. This should be done before the German propaganda offensive began.

Himmler stood between the extreme Ribbentrop and the more reasonable Göring, and rumour had it that he was leaning towards the moderates. The British radio broadcasts in German were of utmost importance. Either more powerful transmitters or Radio Luxembourg should be used to broadcast regularly at favorable times in order to build up a permanent audience in England. There is no doubt that the Prime Minister's prestige on the continent is enormous. His name is almost synonymous with peace. The communist underground movement in Germany is very small and not capable of weakening Hitler.

The Sudeten German population is happy about the end of Czech rule. The German troops behaved admirably. The Germans never had any intention of bombing Prague as long as the Russians did not attack German cities. No precautions had been taken in Berlin against air raids. No gas masks were distributed, no trenches were dug, and no one bothered about shelters. Prague gave the impression of a normal city, a happier city than Berlin. Some believed that the Czechs, out of contempt for France's attitude, would actually be driven into the arms of the Germans. That was not the case, but the Czechs know that they will never again have strategic importance on Germany's flank to actively participate in an anti-German coalition. While Hitler said that there could be no return to Benes' policy, he nevertheless made it clear that he would not interfere in the internal affairs of a purely Slavic state. Czech officials say that the Germans have been very reasonable in the ongoing financial and economic negotiations. Germany has not demanded a customs union. The Czechs regard the French with contempt, the USSR as a great disappointment, and the Germans as an open enemy and a not ungenerous victor. Benesch is extremely unpopular. He is accused of having led the Czechs astray for the last 20 years, of having lined his own pockets, and of having retired with a handsome fortune. It remains undisputed that the Czech administration has been very corrupt since the World War." (FO 371/21665, C 13771, 9. 22. 11. 1938.)

Creswell wrote by hand on this document: "Radio Luxembourg could be useful in times of crisis."

Vansittart noted that the issue of the Luxembourg radio station was being addressed both privately and with the French. The document was also read by Roberts, Sargent, and Cadogan. Although Astor describes the situation in Europe with remarkable accuracy, he too relies on the influence of the "moderates." Further secret messages of great relevance had arrived from them, which

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had to be discussed, explored, and evaluated at the highest political level. Halifax convened the COMMITTEE OF FOREIGN POLICY at short notice for Monday, November 14, 1938, following the cabinet meeting. In addition to Chamberlain, Sir John Simon, Sir Samuel Hoare, Malcolm MacDonald, Viscount Runciman, Viscount Halifax, Sir Thomas Inscip, Oliver Stanley, and Sir Alexander Cadogan were present. Chamberlain chaired the meeting and stated at the outset that relations with Germany and recent events would be discussed. The British government leadership then heard from Halifax the information he had received from "strictly confidential sources" in Germany. He explained that these sources were the same ones that had "proved accurate and reliable in July and August." Furthermore, they were all written in the same "direction." This was therefore information from circles around Ludwig Beck, Weizsäcker, Kordt, Koerber, Kleist-Schmenzin, Wiedemann, and their intermediaries. Halifax began by stating that the German people were not grateful to Hitler but to Chamberlain for the Munich Agreement, and he also maintained the lie that Ribbentrop was still convinced that "England would never dare to go to war." The committee had been convened to hear this old untruth. No wonder it lost its political judgment. Halifax then read out a summary of the reports under discussion:

"An informant who reflects the views of Schacht, Wiedemann, and General Beck assures us that Germany's financial situation... is now absolutely desperate. 'Schacht knows that financial chaos is imminent....' Ribbentrop is pushing Hitler toward far-reaching expansion to the Black Sea, Turkey, and India, but Göring is holding him back... A former German chargé d'affaires in London said in a private conversation that he had always rejected the view that England was decadent. Now I have to completely change my views. England has shown itself to be so unprepared that only superhuman efforts on its part can impress and save the Empire...

A close friend of Hitler said that England's collapse was only a matter of time and would be accelerated by joint German and Italian tactics.... Hitler himself said in a private conversation: 'If I were Chamberlain, I would not waste a minute in preparing my country in the most drastic manner for total war, and I would take the utmost care to do so. If the English have not introduced universal conscription by the spring of 1939, they can consider their empire lost...' (FO 371/21658, C 14396.)

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Astor's report claims that a diplomat recently received important political messages from Ribbentrop that the British government should take to heart. Halifax told the committee that the German people had realized with horror that Hitler's policies had brought them to the brink of war, and that they were deeply grateful to the Prime Minister for preventing war and asserting Germany's legitimate claims. Hitler wanted to restore the prestige he had lost in Munich and was therefore declaring Great Britain the enemy of the German people. It was possible that a resolute stance by England, together with a demonstration of its strength, could "discourage the extremists and encourage the moderates" in Germany. Halifax went on to say that "he had concluded from secret reports that no further Anglo-German talks should be held." That was in November 1938. Almost a year later, the time had come for Chamberlain to shift the blame onto Germany.

The fantasies of Dr. Goerdeler

In a memorandum by Goerdeler, which Ashton-Gwatkin received from Schairer and which was also forwarded to the King of Belgium, President Roosevelt, and Paul Reynaud, Goerdeler proposes the following:

"The British and French governments should send a note to the German government proposing immediate negotiations on the outstanding issues: disarmament, colonies, economic settlement, financial aid, etc., but on condition that the policy of force in internal affairs ceases immediately, as well as in foreign affairs until the negotiations are concluded. If this offer and condition are not accepted by Germany, diplomatic relations are to be broken off.

In this case, Goerdeler guarantees that certain action would begin within Germany to install a government that would accept these conditions... He himself would leave Germany to publish a book that had already been prepared and to organize open opposition to the Nazi government from abroad. Above all, he asks that no concessions be made by England or France during these critical weeks, as they would only strengthen the position, ambition, and violence of the extremists. He asks in particular that no steps be taken...

to settle the Spanish question in the interests of General Franco." Signed Gwatkin (FO 371/21665, C 14809, November 22, 1938 - Top Secret.)

The conspirators thus promise to eliminate Hitler and at the same time demand that Franco not receive any support against the Reds in Spain. According to Goerdeler, Germany is in a state of "confusion caused by overlapping intrigues." The following is a reproduction of a previous report by Goerdeler dated November 17, 1938, to Dr. Schairer:

"The latest events—Kristallnacht—must have opened everyone's eyes. I don't understand why the English are still asking Goebbels questions. Everything he says is a lie. One must recognize that the age of nihilism is beginning. My warnings about Göring were correct. If I am certain that the action will be launched, I will try once more to come to terms with the army leaders. But I must be certain. Negotiations and mild methods will no longer change the Nazi leaders. This must be regarded as certain. For the second time, the opportunity for an ultimatum and for action has presented itself. England and France should immediately demand that representatives be sent, and the German government should guarantee a decent attitude until the conclusion of the negotiations, otherwise diplomatic relations will be broken off. This is not an internal matter, but a matter of internal political and economic relations. The next blow will be directed against the Christian churches and another against capitalism. Only determination can break the spell, and this will succeed to everyone's amazement. Report this to Sir Robert Vansittart. I pledge my word that I am right." (FO 371/21665, November 17, 1938, Top Secret.)

Goerdeler thus demands an English ultimatum against Germany and advises the British government to reject the so-called Kristallnacht as an "internal matter" for Germany and to treat it as an international issue. A good week after this letter, Goerdeler met with a Mr. Young in Switzerland and described his impressions of Italy.

"In Italy, Mussolini has ordered many nonsensical things... The Italian people do not want war...

Mussolini is becoming an old man... He is the worst criminal in Spain. Great Britain can do nothing to weaken his power over this country. The Italian army is suitable for a performance of 'Lohengrin' – but little else. On the other hand, Mussolini has a well-equipped and capable air force. Goerdeler demands that we take a very firm stance against Italy, especially since the demand for Corsica and Tunis, which followed so quickly after the signing of the Italian guarantee pact with England on the status quo in the Mediterranean. He suggested that we recall our ambassador from Pro-

test call back because the spirit of our agreements had been broken. After that, we would be amazed at how quickly the entire Italian 'house of cards' would collapse.

A decisive action against Mussolini would also be a serious blow to Hitler. It would pave the way for a decisive British policy against Hitler, as Goerdeler had always recommended... If the British government does not recognize that the Nazi regime consists of gangsters, and if it does not believe that after the success of Munich these gangsters are determined to behave like 'beasts,' then terrible things will happen to us all... Goerdeler called the planned visit by Chamberlain and Halifax to Rome, which was to take place at the beginning of the next year, highly inopportune because it could be interpreted by the two dictators as a sign of weakness.... Regarding the outcome of Munich, Goerdeler stated: a) England is now viewed with contempt in Switzerland, Holland, and Belgium. b) The great change in the views of high-ranking Germans toward England... 'You know, Germany has always feared Great Britain. Now, after Munich, this fear no longer exists.'" (FO 371/22961, C 938,4. 12. 1938.)

Sargent writes the following about this report on Goerdeler's conversation in Switzerland:

"If one compares this with Goerdeler's recent concrete proposals, the conclusion would be that he is demanding that we refuse Hitler everything because he intends to destroy Christianity and capital. At the same time, however, we are to be prepared to give everything Hitler asks for to a future German government that overthrows him, but not because a future German government will necessarily be more friendly toward Great Britain—Dr. Goerdeler never promised this— we should do this because, from an internal point of view, it would be a socially and politically conservative government under the control of the army. But what reason do we have to assume that, from an international point of view, we and Europe would be better off with such a government? An open and capable military dictatorship could be even more dangerous than the Nazi regime, which has to struggle with all kinds of financial and economic shortcomings." (A. a. ©. In addition to Vansittart, Cadogan and Halifax also read and signed this report.)

The latest Goerdeler Plan

Chamberlain rejected Goerdeler's demand for an English ultimatum because he was not yet in a position to "give Germany

Instill fear." The British government also refused Goerdeler's proposal to regard the riots of November

9 and 10 as an international issue and to help the Jews in Germany. Therefore, on December 4, the former Reich Commissioner presented his new foreign policy plan. In this program, the German conspirators demanded much more than Hitler, as we shall hear. For on October 24, Ribbentrop had already had a very important conversation with the Polish ambassador in Berlin, Lipski. But Goerdeler's naivety and tenacity were unsurpassed. His first program proposal had been rejected in London. A few weeks later, on December 4, 1938, he submitted the so-called Goerdeler Plan to the British government, which he divided into nine points:

"1. England recognizes that the Polish Corridor is a permanent source of anxiety to the justified national feelings and interests of the German people. It therefore agrees that the Corridor shall be liquidated and guarantees Germany all appropriate assistance in this direction. Further measures of support shall depend on the interests of England. But England will in no case prevent Germany from taking the appropriate measures for this purpose.

2. Germany shall receive a colonial territory, if possible a contiguous one. England will use its influence to ensure that all interested parties will immediately endeavor to bring about this situation. Germany will, as far as possible, participate in the emigration to parts of the British Empire where settlement is possible and suitable for whites.

3. Germany shall receive a loan in gold of four to six billion marks to secure its currency on the international market and gradually restore control of import and export exchanges. Germany shall receive a bond for this purpose. The loan shall be interest-free but must be amortized in installments of 2%. Germany may repay the loan at an earlier date. The question of cooperation with the B. I. S. shall be resolved later. The obligation to return to a free exchange of money will compel Germany to balance its budget. This would eliminate one of the most dangerous flashpoints in the world.

4. Further rearmament shall be stopped immediately... Should the attitude of other powers, i.e., Japan and Italy, demand a further increase in their potential, England, France, and Germany will consult with each other. These three powers will meet immediately to discuss disarmament so that it can be achieved gradually, if possible... The goal is to reduce armaments

reduce, as far as the attitude of other powers permits, in order to avert financial catastrophe, prevent the creation of fictitious credit, invest savings usefully, and thereby raise the standard of living.

5. Germany does not seek hegemony in southeastern Europe. Trade in these areas is open to all nations. The great powers would best serve their interests if they did not compete with each other and did not interfere with each other in order to build up industrial development in these countries ...

6. Germany must closely observe developments on its eastern border. This is the lesson of history. This would serve to maintain a reasonable balance of power. Furthermore, the restoration of a reasonable order in Russia, which is presumed to be friendly, should be in the general interest of the powers mentioned above and also in the interest of the United States.

7. Germany guarantees the existing status quo in the Mediterranean. Germany immediately renounces all interest in the Spanish question and supports a speedy peaceful settlement.

8. Germany will cooperate in the complete and immediate restoration of the rights and position of the

white race in East Asia. It is therefore prepared (similar to granting a sufficiently long period of time in the Mediterranean to maintain the status quo) to take joint military measures if England and France adopt a favorable attitude toward the immediate cession of the corridor. Poland's access to the sea can be secured by other means.

9. England, France, and Germany shall immediately establish a new league of nations. A new act of foundation is necessary. All states are invited to join it. The new League of Nations shall have no power of command. It shall act solely through the force of its ideas and through the reasonable treatment of individual cases. It shall settle disputes, advise, deliberate, but act only as a mediator when all parties so desire.

The time has come for Europe to work together to eliminate wars, which only cause damage. The three powers mentioned above will use their cooperation in particular to limit the activities of national governments to politics and administration, leaving economic life to the strongest and most creative power: the will of the individual to live. Economic self-government, under the supervision of the state, should ensure that respect for work, capital, initiative, achievement, and social justice is maintained." (FO 371/21659, C 15084, December 4, 1938, secret.)

Ashton-Gwatkin writes about this Goerdeler Plan that it contains nothing "that we cannot accept, and much that could be to our advantage." He hopes that Goerdeler

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"7 DEC 1938

This is a program of policy submitted to us by Dr. Goerdeler. I translated it myself from the German original.

Dr. Goerdeler is going to Germany today (December 6th) after an absence of several months. He wishes to know 'by word of mouth from H.M. Consul at Leipzig whether H.M.G. would accept

Dr. Goerdeler is going to Germany today (December 6) after an absence of several months. He wishes to know "by word of mouth from H.M. Consul at Leipzig whether H.M.G. would accept this programme as a basis for their future relations with Germany. He would like to receive an answer within the next fortnight – earlier if possible. If the answer is favorable, he would use the Christmas holidays to get in touch with the leaders of the German Army, as well as with industrial leaders and leaders of religious thought, with a view to organizing a body of opinion strong enough to swing German policy in the direction indicated.

He must, however, feel assured in advance that in the event of such a change being made, the British Government would immediately be prepared to open

negotiations on the basis of this program.

negotiations on the basis of this program.

(Ssda.) F.A. Gwatkin 6/12

From the letter Ashton-Gwatkins FO 371/21659, C 15084, 7 December 1938

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a favorable response would be given. Goerdeler was certain "that the generals would agree with his policy if he could say that the British government accepted his program." He was also certain "that the newly appointed commanders-in-chief of the army were of the same ilk as the old ones": Halder, the new chief of staff, was, like Beck, a friend of Goerdeler's. "The Korridorf question is being emphasized in order to win over the generals." Sir Robert Vansittart told Ashton-Gwatkin that he had "read with horror of his support for such ideas. From our point of view, this is nothing short of suicide." (FO 371/21659, C 15084.) William Strang also took a completely different view from Ashton-Gwatkin in five long handwritten pages:

"Goerdeler's plan is similar to the many others we have received from the so-called 'moderates' in Germany. Basically, it almost always says: 'Give Germany back everything it lost in the peace treaties —territorially, financially, and economically—and Germany will then become a good European and throw out its extreme Nazis. If you refuse, Hitler will crush you, and probably with success.'

Goerdeler demands that we sell the Polish Corridor behind Poland's back. We are to redistribute the colonies in order to establish a contiguous territory for Germany.

Goerdeler demands that we sell the Polish corridor behind Poland's back. We are to redistribute the colonies in order to create a contiguous territory for Germany. We are to give the Germans an interest-free loan of several billion. Once granted, such things are irrevocable. In return, we will get the return to free currency exchange, a halt to rearmament, no claim to hegemony in Southeast Europe, and the status quo in the Mediterranean.

The mysterious sentence about the 'benevolent restoration of a reasonable order in Russia' belongs in 'Mein Kampf'. We should have nothing to do with this, and it is not the time to make such concessions to Germany... We should take a firm stance against German excesses; we should not hand over other people's property in their absence, even if we may not be able to save it – the Polish Corridor – and we should categorically reject financial and colonial demands. Germany is itself to blame for its economic woes and should return to orthodox financial management... The German extremist rulers are fighting against the world, they are lowering the standard of living and causing internal disputes. I am not at all sure whether this will not ultimately strengthen Germany in the long run. If that is the case, I see no benefit in helping people like Goerdeler and the army." Signed Strang (ibid.).

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Similar to Strang, Sargent also writes and points out that an earlier plan by Dr. Goerdeler (in Doc. No. 14809) had been much more accommodating and realistic. Furthermore, the current plan is to be conveyed to an "unknown person" who could allegedly exert pressure on the German government solely through Goerdeler's mediation, whose credibility consists solely of his own assurances. Sargent asks the question:

"What would happen if Goerdeler himself or his correspondence or his confidants fell into the hands of the Gestapo and they realized that the British Foreign Office was conspiring with dissatisfied elements in Germany against the German government? Goerdeler's plan must be condemned in every respect." (ibid.)

Cadogan shares Strang and Sargent's view and writes at the end of his handwritten marginal notes, "we should have nothing whatsoever to do with this plan" (ibid.).

In a note for Sir Alexander Cadogan and Sir Orme Sargent, Sir Robert Vansittart wrote about Goerdeler: He had known him since his visit in August 1938, when he had already insisted on the return of the Polish Corridor. Goerdeler may from time to time provide information about the internal situation in Germany, but as a mediator for a settlement he is not only worthless, he is downright dangerous! Vansittart then goes on to claim that Munich was only a prelude to further German and Italian demands—Corsica and Tunis—and asserts, completely illogically, that London now has "the new German demands" with this Goerdeler plan.

He thus lumped the conspirators together with the official German government. He was of course aware that Ribbentrop had shortly before, on October 24, 1938, proposed a balanced compromise to the Polish ambassador Lipski with the following points:

"1. The Free City of Danzig shall return to the German Reich. Danzig is German – has always been German and will always remain German.

2. An extraterritorial Reich motorway belonging to Germany and an equally extraterritorial multi-track railway shall be built through the corridor.

3. Poland shall also receive an extraterritorial road or motorway and railway line and a free port in the Danzig area.

4. Poland shall receive a guarantee of sales for its goods in the Danzig area.

5. The two nations recognize their common borders; if necessary, a guarantee of the territories may be agreed upon.

6. The German-Polish treaty is extended for 10 to 25 years.

7. The two countries shall insert a consultative clause in the treaty." (J. von Ribbentrop, Zwischen ... p. 155; Files V, Doc. 81.)

A week after Goerdeler had conveyed his plan to the British, his London confidant, Dr. Schairer, together with the Englishman A. P. Young, visited Ashton-Gwatkin on December 10 to discuss the Goerdeler Plan. Shortly before, the German emperor is said to have given an interview in Doorn in which he criticized the National Socialist government. Schairer believed that Goerdeler had a hand in this. It was the first step in the following program:

"As soon as the generals are ready – and this will depend mainly on what Goerdeler hears from us regarding his program – the Kaiser will board a German warship and, from there, in a radio broadcast, release the nation from its oath to him (this is very important in view of the loyalty of the army), but ask them to remain loyal to his grandson, Prince Friedrich. The army would then occupy the radio station in Berlin, as well as the Reichsbank, and proclaim the restoration of the monarchy and the persecution of the leaders of the Nazi regime. Approximately 2,000 leaders would be arrested immediately, and investigations would uncover the scandals of the regime and make them known

everywhere. It is therefore urgent that Dr. Goerdeler receive a favorable response to his plan by December 18. A favorable response from England would be the turning point for his arguments against the generals. Dr. Schairer believes that the action will take place immediately, perhaps between December 18 and 31.

If Dr. Goerdeler does not receive a favorable response, he will probably leave Germany and openly build up the opposition from abroad instead of secretly within Germany. The leader of the army will be Fritsch, and Neurath will be part of the plot from the outset—but not Schacht. Dr. Goerdeler will probably be Reich Chancellor in the new government." (FO 371/21665, Secret. December 10, 1938. Marginalia by Sargent, Vansittart, Halifax, and Cadogan.)

Chamberlain received this report from Cadogan on December 11. He wanted "nothing to do with it and was very skeptical of Goerdeler's plan," Cadogan writes. Ashton-Gwatkin also notes in handwriting that Vansittart had seen Dr. Schairer in the meantime and explained to him that it was impracticable to send an "authorized message to Dr. Goerdeler. It would have to be left to his common sense to do so."

to his friends." He warned that such a message could become known in Germany. (Cadogan Diaries, December 10 and 11, 1938.)

Ambassador Phipps also reported from Paris to Permanent Under-Secretary Cadogan that he had heard from Prof. Gebhardt, Himmler's doctor, that the "restoration of the Hohenzollerns" was expected in Germany. He relayed the opinion of Daniel Nusbaum Heinemann, a friend living in Brussels of George S. Messersmith, a strongly anti-German ministerial director in the US State Department. According to Heinemann, who was in close contact with Schacht, "no one should help Hitler, because if the Nazis were overthrown, the regime would disintegrate from within." He hoped that the French would continue their radio broadcasts in German so that the German people would "get an idea of the truth." To provoke the British, he also claimed that "the Nazis now finally regarded England as their main enemy, whom Hitler wanted to defeat." Phipps knew, of course, that the opposite was true, because Hitler considered securing the British Empire vital for Europe. He also had concerns about Dr. Schacht, who, even during his time as ambassador in 1936/37, "had said things to certain people for which he could have been shot. But Dr. Schacht had still not been shot." (FO 371/21666, C 16022, December 17, 1938.)

Ashton-Gwatkin received a similar memorandum on December 23, 1938, from a Mr. Hugh Smith, who belonged to the Hambros Bank: On the night of Munich, when it became clear that there would be no war, cheers of relief were heard here and there among the workers. We encountered no hostility toward England anywhere, but friendliness everywhere. English newspapers could be sold everywhere except for the News Chronicle, and the upper classes in Germany were reading The Times more and more. But these classes complained that the English criticism did not "respect the reasonable desire of the German people to strive for their recovery and their right to be recognized as a nation. We have received emphatic indications from various young civil servants that sooner or later an internal change must take place." Smith's general impression of Germany did not differ from earlier reports: the Nazi government no longer had the support of the masses. The British press showed too little sympathy and too little understanding for German history and for the

difficulties imposed on Germany by the Treaty of Versailles. The economic situation would remain stable for a considerable period of time, but at the expense of food restrictions and compulsory labor. Goebbels and Ribbentrop were very anti-British, while Göring and many of the young Nazi officials, although not pro-British, were certainly not antagonistic. The alliance with Italy was unpopular. Everyone was astonished by Italy's claim to Tunis. No one had broached the colonial question. A Catholic Nazi official feared the expropriation of all church property in Germany and Austria. (FO 371/21666, C45981, December 21, 1938.) - Church property in Germany and Austria was never confiscated.

Kordt: Hitler wants to bomb London in March

To lend weight to Goerdeler's renewed initiative in London, Erich Kordt intervened. He informed Ivone Kirkpatrick of the alarming news that Hitler was planning to bomb London in March 1939, requesting that she forward it immediately to the British government. Kirkpatrick rushed to London that same day to contact Chamberlain immediately. The prime minister took Kordt's warning very seriously and called a cabinet meeting for 10 a.m. on December 16. Chamberlain also received Schacht, who demanded: "No appeasement with Hitler."

Based on Kirkpatrick's secret message, the Committee of Imperial Defense met for three secret sessions. Cadogan noted in his diary: "We have achieved a great deal, and it seems that we are making progress, but sometimes I wish we were a totalitarian state." (Cadogan Diaries, December 15 and 22, 1938, p. 130£.) At this meeting, it was decided to strengthen air defense measures and preparations for civil defense. All British military authorities were ordered to put the English war plans on alert within three months, i.e., before the end of March 1939. (Meeting of the Committee for Empire Defense, Cab. 2/8.) Once again, the German conspirators had the English government under their thumb.

On January 3, 1939, the chargé d'affaires of the British Embassy in Berlin, George Ogilvie-Forbes, sent a report on the situation in Germany at the beginning of the new year to Halifax. Ogil-

vie-Forbes states that "Hitler has almost achieved his long-cherished desire to annex the contiguous German-inhabited territories on Germany's borders to the Reich." Henderson also used this wording when he fought with his government for the return of the Sudetenland and the German city of Danzig. Ogilvie-Forbes writes about Göring's Four-Year Plan that it had ensured the greatest possible autarky in 1938 and that Germany was now able to defend itself against external attacks. For this reason, Germany was being mobilized in order to be prepared for all eventualities. Germany could only obtain raw materials in the East, which was why there were many rumors about Ukraine and Romania. Hitler hoped to neutralize France and, if possible, "overwhelm Great Britain by means of an air raid and the use of submarines before it had completed its rearmament." Hitler wanted to avoid war with France and would therefore not encourage Rome to intensify its demands—Tunis and Corsica—in Paris.

Ogilvie-Forbes continues in his report: "I see no sign whatsoever that Göring, although No. 2 in the state, would take any action against Hitler, for he too is extremely loyal to his boss." He also mentions the conversation between Dominion Minister MacDonald and South African Defense Minister Pirow, which took place on December 5, 1938. Pirow was of German descent and had shown strong separatist and republican tendencies. He received confidential information about "Nazi intentions," such as that

the Germans were fatalistic about the coming war. Ogilvie-Forbes ended his report with a warning:

"I have heard from various sources that in the highest political circles in London, it is still believed that in the event of war with Germany, we hold a trump card that could tip the scales, namely the power to provoke an internal revolt. With all due respect, I consider this a dangerous mistake. Whether and when Mr. Hitler decides that war with England is necessary, the Germans—extremists and moderates alike—will follow him with their characteristic discipline as one man, and the SS will deal with any supposed opposition immediately and mercilessly. It will take a long time, and only after much mutual destruction will the opposition raise its head. It is not a trump card that we already hold in our hands. At best, it is a trump card that may one day be played." (FO 371/22960, C 173, signed Ogilvie-Forbes, January 3, 1939.)

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This report was sent to the British embassies in Paris, Warsaw, and Prague.

Chamberlain completely lacked a sober assessment of the situation within Germany. Unlike Ogilvie-Forbes, the Prime Minister was "optimistic that the Nazi regime would collapse." At least, that was the impression gained by the Swedish Crown Prince, and Cadogan expressed the view that "we will stumble into war if there is no revolution in Germany." (Cadogan Diaries, December 2 and 22, 1938, pp. 127, 132.)

F.K. Roberts comments on Ogilvie-Forbes' report: "It is dangerous folly to cultivate relations with Göring & Co. behind the backs of Ribbentrop & Co., and it would also be a waste of time, because Mr. Hitler alone determines policy." Sir Orme Sargent recommends circulating Ogilvie-Forbes' interesting report. He believes that England should not guarantee the status of Central and Eastern Europe, because since the collapse of Czechoslovakia, Germany has become the dominant power in this part of Europe:

"We cannot build a bulwark to prevent Germany's expansion. This does not mean, of course, that we will not defend our economic interests in this part of Europe as far as possible. But as far as purely political problems are concerned, we must decide for ourselves what course to take to stop German hegemony. I fear that we can at best exclude Turkey and Greece from German rule. Although it would be unwise to give the impression that we are following Field Marshal Göring, I am nevertheless of the opinion that we should respond to any overtures on his part" (ibid.).

The Ogilvie-Forbes report was also read by Vansittart, Strang, Cadogan, and Halifax.

Hitler-Beck-Ribbentrop talks in January 1939

After Polish Ambassador Lipski had responded very cautiously to the German proposals on October 24, 1938, Ribbentrop's further efforts to reach an agreement were also unsuccessful. The Polish government did not accept the German proposal for an extraterritorial motorway and railway through the corridor and the reincorporation of Danzig into the Reich, even though the Poles had been expressly promised that they would also have an extraterritorial road with motorway and railway in the Danzig area.

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railways and a free port. Foreign Minister Colonel Beck had already declared at the end of December 1938 that "any concession on the corridor question" would mean war because it would "affect Poland's sovereignty." (DBFP II, No. 437.) During talks with British Ambassador Kennard in

Warsaw, Colonel Beck concealed the fact that Germany had not proposed a corridor, but only an extraterritorial road and railway through the corridor. If Hitler had accepted Beck's proposal, the German government would have been able to use the corridor for its own purposes.

Warsaw, Colonel Beck concealed the fact that Germany had not proposed a corridor, but only an extraterritorial road and railway through the corridor. If Hitler had accepted Beck's position that extraterritorial roads violated the sovereignty of a country, he would not have been able to make his above offer at all, because then, after the return of Danzig, the

promised extraterritorial roads through this territory would also violate the sovereignty of Poland.

promised extraterritorial roads through this territory would also violate the sovereignty of Poland.

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On January 5 and 6, 1939, Beck was in Germany and held talks with the Chancellor and Ribbentrop. Hitler declared, among other things, that Germany's relationship with Poland had "not changed in the slightest" and that he had the greatest interest in a strong national Poland, because that would mean "considerable military relief" for Germany vis-à-vis the Soviet armies. Hitler also emphasized that he was "striving for extensive trade relations with Poland" and referred to the Vienna Arbitration Award of October 29, 1938, which he had only very reluctantly accepted. But Germany could not stand idly by and watch a war break out between Czechoslovakia and Hungary because of Horthy's "additional demand" for larger parts of Carpathian Ukraine. In Vienna, "Ciano, as is well known, emphatically supported the Hungarian claims, while Ribbentrop supported the Czechoslovak claims." (Vertrags-Ploetz, Konferenzen und Verträge, 1959 edition, p. 158.) In his talks with Beck, Hitler showed great understanding for the fact that "Poland needed access to the sea," but explained that Germany also had a "need for a connection with East Prussia." He was therefore seeking a formula "under which Danzig would become part of the German community politically but remain with Poland economically." He wanted to supplement the 1934 non-aggression pact to the effect that Germany would now "give Poland a clear, contractually fixed guarantee of its borders." This was not easy for him, and he would certainly be "criticized quite a bit" in Germany for it. He assured them that no "fait accompli" would be created in Danzig. Beck did not raise the claim that extraterritorial roads through the corridor would violate Poland's sovereignty in his talks with Hitler and Ribbentrop; he had only said this to the British.

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However, he emphasized that "Poland would never allow itself to become dependent on Russia." (ADAP V, Doc. 119.) At this point, Ribbentrop had already been invited to Warsaw for an official return visit, which took place on January 26, 1939. Burckhardt, who was very knowledgeable about the Polish question, wrote the following about this upcoming event:

"Joachim von Ribbentrop's trip to Warsaw already caused a not inconsiderable part of Western opinion

at the time to fear that an agreement on Danzig and the Corridor problem might still be reached." (Burckhardt, op. cit., p. 326.)

The Western powers therefore did not want an agreement between Germany and Poland on the disputed issues and were therefore fearful of Ribbentrop's negotiations in Warsaw. Roosevelt also intervened and, one day before Ribbentrop's arrival in Poland, sent his plenipotentiary ambassador Bullitt to Paris to ensure that France renounced the disinterest in the East it had declared to Ribbentrop in December 1938. This renunciation of its eastern allies, later denied by French Foreign Minister Bonnet, is confirmed by the then Polish ambassador Lukasiewicz. Bonnet had informed him of his talks with Ribbentrop after December 6, 1938, and "emphasized that he had pointed out to the German partner the futility of both the alliance with us and the pact with Soviet Russia." (Polish Documents on the Prehistory of the War I, Berlin 1940, Doc. 5.) This reorientation of French foreign policy after Ribbentrop's visit to Paris is also confirmed by another statement by Bonnet, which is reproduced in a secret report by the German Abwehr. According to this report, Bonnet had "achieved remarkable personal success before the foreign affairs committees of both the Senate and the Chamber and had managed to consolidate his position in the Foreign Ministry. His foreign policy thesis is that France should not directly stand in Germany's way, but should, albeit passively, enable it to maneuver around the well-known Polish-French and Soviet-French ties on the one hand, and to concentrate on its drive eastward on the other." Bonnet's remark in the Chamber's Foreign Affairs Committee is revealing in this context: "If difficulties should arise internally in connection with Ukrainian tendencies toward autonomy in Soviet Russia or Poland, France's obligations toward these states would not be fulfilled." (Foreign Secret! Berlin, December 20, 1938, No. 10752/38. Confidential.

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Ex. I E.-T 79 E, PG 49172. US Navy Archive. Washington, D.C.) However, while Ribbentrop was still in Warsaw, Bonnet gave a speech after Bullitt's arrival in Paris on January 25, 1939, in which he demonstratively spoke of a French "presence in the East." (ADAP IV, Doc. 383.)

The then American ambassador in Rome, William Phillips, writes about Roosevelt's interference in Europe:

"It is the worst possible policy for us to publicly ally ourselves with one bloc against another in Europe. It is un-American and none of our business to act in this way. I fear that Bill Bullitt, who is so close to the president and is by nature so bombastic and irresponsible, is to blame for pushing the president into this pro-French and anti-German-Italian policy. During the last three months, he has been in and out of the White House, and under his influence, the president has publicly condemned the totalitarian states." (William Phillips' diaries, Houghton Library, Harvard University.)

This note from the US ambassador in Rome is an extremely revealing criticism of Roosevelt and his European policy. At this point, it is already clear what Roosevelt was aiming for. Through his active interference in Polish politics, he prevented a peaceful agreement between Berlin and Warsaw.

Under the impression of his talks with Colonel Beck, Ribbentrop declared to his colleagues on the return trip from Warsaw to Berlin: "Now the only way out is to come to an agreement with Russia if

we don't want to be completely encircled." (Ribbentrop: Between London and Moscow, p. 160.)

"Summary based on information from secret sources"

The wealth of secret English documents reveals that 1939 began with lively contacts between the German conspirators and British government circles. The same names and the same topics appear repeatedly in the documents. The conspirators had lost a battle in 1938: Hitler could not be eliminated because the British had to take a different political path, which had led to the Munich Agreement. The British ambassador in Berlin, Henderson, had assessed the situation in Germany more accurately than his superiors in London were willing to admit. The reports of the conspirators and their accomplices

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In early 1939, men of the press were also conscientiously persecuted. The very thorough evaluation by high-ranking British officials and their numerous marginal notes show that the English government attached great importance to these conspiracy reports.

In January 1939, Kirkpatrick reported that the Catholic bishop of Berlin had told him that "the government's next step will probably be the confiscation of property and money. The country is becoming more and more like Russia, and soon we will be no better off than if we were ruled by Stalin." It was now almost impossible for Germans to obtain permission to travel abroad. Papen wanted to know what questions the Foreign Office would ask him. Kirkpatrick replied: "Is Hitler prepared to grant England equal rights?" (FO 371/23005, January 6, 1939, signed I. Kirkpatrick.)

Oliver Harvey reports in his diaries on January 15 and 16, 1939, that Masdyk, the Berlin correspondent for a Dutch newspaper, had stated as fact that Hitler would occupy Holland in the spring. "The extremists, especially Ribbentrop, are in power, and the economic situation is getting worse and worse, with poor nutrition and a shortage of coal." Hitler wanted to monopolize the raw materials in southeastern Europe. Harvey even brought the Dutchman to Halifax. As a result, the cabinet met on January 29 to discuss a German attack on Holland and Switzerland. It was also decided that, if necessary, the warship Repulse should take the English king to Canada. In this way, any journalist could influence the politics of the British Empire. (Oliver Harvey's diaries.)

On January 19, 1939, Halifax circulated his "Top Secret" memorandum to the Committee on Foreign Policy, which stated: "All reports indicate that Hitler is planning a coup for the beginning of this year, and that the dangerous period will begin at the end of February. Contrary to his earlier intention, he has now decided to launch an overwhelming attack on the Western powers. The committee was presented with a "summary of information from secret sources." These went back to the Munich Conference, and it was even claimed that Hitler was now thinking of "destroying London and the English fleet by air attacks." Ribbentrop had claimed that if no agreement could be reached with England, the Führer was determined to "destroy it by war." The British government leadership was informed of the summary as follows:

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"a) Germany is ruled by one man, Mr. Hitler, whose will alone is valid and who is a mixture of a fanatic, a madman, and a clear-sighted realist.

b) His ambition and self-confidence are boundless, and he regards Germany's supremacy in Europe as a

step toward world domination. Since Munich, he has become strangely susceptible to extremist influences.

c) At the moment, he is preoccupied with the East in order to control and exploit the riches in the South, and probably also those of Russia.

d) He also intends to subject the east and southeast of Europe to Germany's political and economic hegemony, to reduce them to vassal states, if not worse. Polish and Romanian integrity are threatened.

e) Sooner or later, he intends to reclaim Germany's colonial possessions or, as compensation, overseas territories that are satisfactory. But that does not seem to be the primary goal at the moment.

f) He is interested in the Middle East and intends to extend his influence to South America and force the Japanese to grant him special privileges in China.

g) England has now become Mr. Hitler's and the Nazi Party's enemy number one. He is embittered and angry with the British. His extremist advisers, who are particularly anti-British, feed him stories about England's "decadence."

h) The East – especially Ukraine – is the question of the day. But Mr. Hitler is unpredictable, even to his confidants. He is capable of overturning the machine he helped build, regardless of the policies achieved and his own initiative, in order to take some other direction at short notice. He can personally cause a conflagration without regard for the consequences for his regime." (FO 371/22961/793.)

In response to this summary, Alexander Cadogan insisted that "the President of the United States be given our full confidence by informing him of all our fears and intentions. The 'specter' of a Japanese attack on the Dutch East Indies will not fail to make an impression on Roosevelt. Furthermore, not only the highest English politicians, but also the American government will continue to be fed Erich Kordt's lies that Ribbentrop had called the British a degenerate people in the 'A 5522'. This brief summary contains all the slanders that the conspirators spread about the leaders of the National Socialist government at that time.

Two memoranda, most likely written by Con-

well-Evans, a long-time friend of Erich Kordt, reveal the wishes and demands of the German conspirators (FO 371/22961, C 939): The British government must rely more than before on the anti-Hitler Germans. Hitler had lost the trust of the German people due to England's firm stance in the September crisis. It would then have been possible to take action against him. But this opportunity had not been lost. The German people were being fed propaganda, and even the economic leaders did not understand Hitler's Saarbrücken speech of October 1938, in which he branded Eden, Duff Cooper, and Vansittart as warmongers because of their previous speeches. Ribbentrop supported Hitler in his contempt for "a decadent and weak England." - Here we have it again, the Kordt lie, from the falsified contents of the London report "A 5522." - After every conceivable insult to the German government, Conwell-Evans offers advice for "future British policy" and writes: "In the opinion of my German informants, His Majesty's Government should continue to make a distinction between the regime and its victims. This policy should emphasize with energy and skill the virtues and high qualities of the German nation, etc." The "moderate" Germans want Chamberlain to publicly announce that he "sees

through Hitler's intentions and goals." This "moral weapon" should be used persistently by the Prime Minister and on the radio to make Hitler's plans for the East impossible:

"This propaganda must be based on the sincere desire for cooperation with the German people and on the recognition of their legitimate aspirations and rights under a decent government. If this is done skillfully, I have been told, the regime will collapse within six or twelve months. If the German people do not receive the most positive, persistent, and active support from the British government in this regard, it will be impossible for them to revolt against the all-powerful regime. We cannot wait for events in Germany. Our intervention must be as skillful, courageous, and determined as possible. Its effectiveness will be all the greater if it is based on a sincere desire to cooperate with the German nation. Otherwise, we cannot expect any results" (ibid.).

Finally, Conwell-Evans recommends that England should no longer adhere to the "principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries," because Germany is also intervening in Spain to drop bombs there. The German-Italian intervention in Spain saved Franco from the Reds and

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brought him to power, while England often took the side of the Communists in the Non-Intervention Committee and France supported them with weapons and volunteers. As the mouthpiece of the conspirators, Conwell-Evans demanded that England should

"completely unyielding policy, because a second Munich in the sense of a physical victory for Hitler, it was claimed, would strengthen his regime hopelessly. Our rearmament should be carried out with the utmost determination, because a second Munich in the sense of a physical victory for Hitler, it was claimed, would strengthen his regime hopelessly. Our rearmament should be carried out with the utmost determination, because a second Munich in the sense of a physical victory for Hitler, it was claimed, would strengthen his regime hopelessly. Our rearmament should be carried out with the utmost determination, because a second Munich in the sense of a physical victory for Hitler, it was claimed, would strengthen his regime hopelessly. Our rearmament should be carried out with the utmost determination, because a second Munich in the sense of a physical victory for Hitler, it was claimed, would strengthen his regime hopelessly. Our rearmament should be carried out with the utmost determination, because a second Munich in the sense of a physical victory for Hitler, it was claimed, would strengthen his regime hopelessly. Our rearmament should be carried out with the utmost determination, because a second Munich in the sense of a physical victory for Hitler, it was claimed, would strengthen his regime hopelessly. Our rearmament should be carried out with the utmost determination, because a second Munich in the sense of a physical victory for Hitler, it was claimed, would strengthen his regime hopelessly. Our

"completely unyielding policy, because a second Munich in the sense of a physical victory for Hitler, it was claimed, would hopelessly strengthen his regime. Our rearmament should be pushed forward at the greatest speed, I was told. Our newspapers should be illustrated with pictures of the Air Force, the fleet, and the army to highlight our strength. The speeches of our ministers should reflect the strength and confidence in the reserves of our empire and also the vitality of our people... An unyielding attitude is necessary to achieve the final collapse of the Hitler regime, also with regard to Mussolini. Ciano and Ribbentrop, I was told, are united in their hatred of England. General Graziani has declared that Italy and Germany could drive the English out of Africa. My German informants hope that no concessions

will be made to Italy. I have been told that it would be easy to defeat Hitler in the Mediterranean, while it would be difficult for England to hold its ground with regard to Ukraine or the minorities in Poland" (ibid.).

Conwell-Evans had been in Germany every year since 1923 and assured his government that his "information came from people in Germany who were familiar with government documents and plans." He hammered home to his government that the threat to the British Empire was "not a matter of months, but of weeks. All our propaganda reserves should be brought into play next week, rather than next month, and in such a way that the friendly Germans will support us." Just like Erich Kordt, Conwell-Evans also called for the English power to be emphasized. Malcolm Muggeridge, who has said many wise things, commented aptly: "Much of the trouble in world politics is caused by people who flex their muscles without having any." (Die Welt, Hamburg, May 20, 1972.)

Conwell-Evans reported on another conversation with a "high-ranking German who was a significant source of information." On December 20, 1938, he sent a series of secret documents from German friends who had been "reliable" sources in recent years. He wrote again of the "unbridgeable gulf" between Hitler and the British people and of the "impossibility" of finding a lasting settlement between England and Germany based on "equal rights." England must not allow Hitler "any further successes," Conwell-Evans wrote, adding: "All my German

Friends are praying that Great Britain and France will not give an inch."

To justify their position, they claimed that "Hitler's ambitions and plans were so varied and far-reaching, and changed so often, that they were a constant source of concern to the General Staff." At the moment, however, it appeared that Hitler "did not want to subjugate Great Britain" and that "a blow against Russia and Poland was imminent in the spring." Hitler would only turn against the Western powers later and dictate a "German peace." Conwell-Evans was assured "that Hitler would meet his doom through a revolution in the Reich if he risked letting the German people march against France and Great Britain." Finally, he summarized his report:

"a) Nazi Germany's foreign policy dreams extend beyond Europe, Asia, and Africa...

b) Hitler and his general staff are planning the invasion of Russia in order to replace Stalin and the Bolsheviks with a German-friendly government, a new nationalist Russia, and to separate Ukraine.

c) If plan b) is successful, Hitler expects to have a new ally in the East and will no longer need to negotiate with England and France ...

d) As impossible as this absurd plan may seem to us, it has already been worked out by the Nazi government. For Hitler and Ribbentrop, there is no longer any equality for England.

e) The strength of the opposition – the conspiracy circle – should not be overestimated. The majority of the armed forces are more loyal to Hitler than ever... The opponents of the Nazi regime are unarmed and unable to take any effective action. It is difficult to predict when and how their real chance will come, except through a very dangerous war. Fear of the enemy could then cause the masses to revolt. If things go badly in an invasion of Russia and the core of the Red Army remains intact and refuses to abandon Stalin or establish a pro-German government, then strong intervention by Great Britain and

France might bring about the downfall of the Nazi government. Opportunities for Great Britain could arise if it impresses the German people by demonstrating its national strength, material resources, and morale, and does so far more effectively than it has done so far...

f) Germany's periodic demands for colonies are intended to conceal the shortage of food as well as Hitler's intentions to attack in the East.

g) For the future, I humbly suggest that British ideals be emphasized, such as fair play, open discussion, and

written and spoken, tolerance and respect for Christian methods ... Our policy should now convince reasonable-minded men in Germany and encourage the opposition. This cannot be achieved solely by praising peace. Through an information campaign using radio, the press, and all available means, the strength of the British Empire's navy and air force must be emphasized. Here and there, reference should be made to the almost infinite potential of the United States, because the German people like to associate the British Commonwealth with the United States when they think of the strength of the Western powers. Our future policy should consolidate itself more closely with France, the France of Reynaud and not the France of Flandin, Bonnet, and the bankers....

For the rest, our recovery depends on the skill of our statesmen. Our position is already badly shaken, but we will find opportunities in the coming months to bring Hitler down. We must convince Mussolini and other powers of our perseverance and the value of our friendship through great national efforts." (FO 371/22961, January 20, 1939.)

In Appendix II, Conwell-Evans reports, based on secret information from "Q," that only a small number of German pilots were physically able to withstand the strain of the Stukas' dive bombing. The British are also given the exact number of German troops, including SS units. Well-informed friends in Germany told Conwell-Evans that "the German secret service had gained valuable ground in England with Ribbentrop's help." These friends recommend that Scotland Yard keep a close watch on the many German agents in England. Hitler had informed the German press in strict confidence that the "lines between Prague and Paris and between Prague and London had been tapped during the last crisis. That is why he knew exactly where he stood." The marginal note reads "Yes." Appendix III reproduces the conversation of a "German in a responsible official position" on October 20, 1938. According to this, the conspirators had planned to "kill" Hitler within a few days if he risked war against England, France, and Czechoslovakia. Chamberlain is advised to emphasize the difference between English feelings toward the German leaders and toward the German people. He should "remain firm and show resistance." No lasting settlement with "Hitler & Co." is possible. Hitler is sick and has "fits of rage."

What Conwell-Evans had learned here from his German "well-informed friends" about the physically exhausted pilots

about the SS units and Ribbentrop's well-developed secret service was military treason. Vansittart writes in a note and two addenda to the previous reports that one of the informants never believed that resistance in Germany "would rise so quickly against the regime. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that Hitler's popularity has suffered a severe blow. His star was falling and Göring's was rising. A

conflict between the two could arise." Vansittart also invented the lie that "Hitler personally ordered the synagogues to be set on fire." Vansittart claimed to have heard from two German sources that Hitler and Beck had reached an agreement. French Foreign Minister Bonnet had refused to meet Colonel Beck in France. In Warsaw, it was being said openly that only "a miracle could save the French alliance. Ribbentrop was not rushing to Warsaw for nothing, because Phipps had reported that Bonnet had no intention of saving the alliance with Poland." Hitler would, because of the colonies, "issue threats or even declare war on this basis" at the appropriate moment. Hitler expected "to conquer Holland in eight days and then demand as much of Africa as he wanted from us and annex the Dutch East Indies."

On January 16, 1939, Vansittart wrote to Halifax:

"Both Dr. Schacht and Count Schwerin von Krosigk have told Hitler that the internal situation in Germany is desperate. Either public spending must be cut or taxes raised. Brinkmann from the Ministry of Finance has said that disaster is imminent. Hitler intended to destroy Christianity. An attack on the East combined with an attack on Holland and Switzerland and, at the same time, on England and France was imminent. However, an attack on Ukraine was only a bluff with which Ribbentrop wanted to keep his English friends. The real attack was directed against the West. Hitler added that Ribbentrop alone had shown courage during the September crisis and that in his next decision he would rely more on Ribbentrop's advice than on the advice of others."

An attack on Switzerland was never planned, and Hitler did not decide to march through Holland until the spring of 1940, after England and France had declared war.

William Strang wrote the following about these reports: For France, the question was whether it should support England in the event of a German attack. The French government then wanted to make airports available to England. However, the view was widespread among the French that England would only

"burden" if it did not make greater efforts for French national defense. The British government wanted to hold general staff talks with Belgium and encourage this in Brussels.

"burden" if it did not make greater efforts for French national defense. The British government wanted to hold general staff talks with Belgium and would suggest this in Brussels. The British government had no obligations to support Holland other than its League of Nations commitments. The British military attaché was working in both The Hague and Brussels and would be retained in Brussels in the event of a crisis. Strang therefore recommended inviting the Dutch Prime Minister to England in order to bring about a change in this arrangement without appearing to do so demonstratively. (a.a. ©. signed William Strang, January 16, 1939.) Cadogan collected all these reports for the "Committee on Foreign Affairs" under the heading: "Summary of information from secret sources" and explained:

"The sources cited in the summary have been verified over a long period of time. In most cases, there is no doubt that they – the conspirators – expressed themselves as reported. It is unnecessary to say that they would be in great danger of 'liquidation' if any hint of their reports became known. And even more serious is the fact that we would then receive no further information." (FO 371/22961, Foreign Office, January 17, 1939.)

Halifax did not have this information from secret sources, which was based on the statements of

German traitors, typed, but had it printed and distributed within the inner circle of the Foreign Policy Committee.

"British cooperation with the United States and British propaganda in Germany"

Under this title, Foreign Office official Leeper summarized his views on how propaganda against Germany should be conducted on January 16, 1939.

Sargent writes about this memorandum:

"On the question of British propaganda in Germany, I would suggest that it be considered from three angles:

a) Playing on the fears of the Nazi party,

b) Playing on the fears of the German people,

c) Showing the German people that we make a distinction between them and the regime.

Regarding a), I would suggest that we emphasize our material strength today and in the future in every way possible and our intention to use it if necessary. Our material strength would naturally include not only our armaments, but also our human potential, our imperial resources, our economic reserves, and above all the inner attitude of our nation. But we should take care to present our situation in such a way that the British public does not fall into complacency. It is therefore necessary that new efforts be made again and again.

Regarding b), I would suggest that, in addition to a), we should take every opportunity to show the German people that they are being led by the Nazi Party down the path of war and threats of war, of death and destruction, that the regime is rapidly developing into Bolshevism, that the economic suffering of the German people is not due to the hostility of other countries, but to the wasteful leadership of the Nazi Party. That with a reasonable government, Germany would have the opportunity to live and once again enjoy prosperity and peace. That, on the other hand, there can be no cooperation or stability between nations as long as the Nazi Party rules Germany, that the policies of the Nazi government actually mean war, the consequences of which the German people will have to bear in their entirety, and that ultimately the great moral truths upheld by democracy are eternal and invincible.

These truths are: defense of personal freedom, both physical and moral; cooperation between nations to ensure mutual trust and respect and the improvement of the welfare of all; condemnation of the entire system of power politics between governments; determination to uphold and strengthen these principles with all the means at our disposal and the rejection of any compromise merely to achieve a temporary or partial relief of the situation.

Regarding c), I would like to propose that we make known to the German people how deeply we believe that they also believe in the moral truths mentioned above, and that we know how much they suffer from the complete suppression of these values in Germany; that we follow with sympathy and hope the struggle of the German people who want to return to these truths, because only through this return can Germany be saved from physical and moral destruction, no matter what fleeting and

superficial successes the Nazi regime may have at the moment. In order to convey these thoughts under the guise of news, it would be necessary for them to be presented in speeches by men who are known to the public, rather than in press articles....

Leeper's second proposal, namely cooperation with the United States, raises a delicate issue that we

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must be carefully reconsidered. It should therefore be completely separated from the open question of British propaganda and dealt with separately..." (FO 371/23006, C 1931, January 16, 1939, signed Sargent.)

Sargent considers Leepers' proposal to initiate cooperation with the United States dangerous because an exchange of ideas with Roosevelt had already taken place in January 1938, which had led to nothing. Even now, England would be unable to make a decision. "If we issue a statement that we want to fight for our principles, then actions must follow." Sargent adds, verbatim:

"Our argument is that we want to assert our principles, which are being trampled underfoot by Hitler. If we ask that steps be taken jointly with the US, that would be tantamount to inviting the US government to join us in an active crusade against Hitler... It would suffice for our purpose at the moment if we could induce the government of the United States to issue a joint statement with us affirming our common belief in those fundamental principles which our two countries hold dear and which the Nazi regime seeks to destroy." (January 21, 1939, signed Sargent, op. cit.)

Cadogan believes that England should now take Roosevelt fully into confidence. "We have reached the 'Rubicon.'" (FO 371/23006, January 21, 1939.) The most important excerpts from the secret information that Halifax presented to the Foreign Affairs Committee on January 19, 1939, were forwarded in a secret message to the American president personally on January 24. After the American chargé d'affaires in London, Herschel Johnson, had received this message, which had been expressly approved by Chamberlain, he said: "I feel quite sick." (Telegram No. 37 IMPORTANT. Secret. January 24, 1939. FO 371/22961/7931 and Cadogan Diaries, January 24, 1939, p. 141.)

On February 6, Chamberlain delivered a sharp speech in the British House of Commons, which Cadogan described as a "turning point." At the same time, the American government was informed of the British decision to declare war on Germany if it invaded Holland. Once again, the interaction between the conspiratorial false reports and London's reactions became apparent. (Cadogan Diaries, February 6 and 7, 1939, p. 147. DBFP IV, No. 64. Halifax to Mallet, February 7, 1939, Doc. No. 87.)

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Goerdeler's alarm messages were intended to "make British blood run cold."

Also on January 20, Ashton-Gwatkin reported on the latest news he had received from Goerdeler in Germany. Schacht had been dismissed and had received a letter of thanks from Hitler for his cooperation. Goerdeler again claimed that Hitler would attack Holland and Switzerland in order to have a bargaining chip against the Western powers. All these absurd rumors from the circle of conspirators were intended to stir up anti-German sentiment in England. (FO 371/22961, C 887, January 20, 1939.)

Finally, Roberts wrote a summary memorandum on Goerdeler, who was one of the main sources of information for the British. He believed that Schacht's dismissal and Wiedemann's transfer to San Francisco as consul general were related. Both belonged to the "moderates" and were in "close contact" with Dr. Goerdeler, who is referred to here as "X." "X" was extremely "anti-Nazi and had in fact worked for the overthrow of the regime." Since last August, he had been a "reliable source of information" and now reported that Hitler had decided on an attack in the West in the very near future. Dr. Goerdeler's name should not be mentioned under any circumstances, as he still enjoyed "considerable freedom" in Germany. Hitler was "crazy," and Himmler, who was called the Robespierre of Germany, was the only one who could influence him. In Goerdeler's opinion, the Hitler case must be settled "within the next six months, i.e., by May 1939 at the latest." Hitler would seek conflict with the Dutch and then conquer Holland, Belgium, and Switzerland. This document was also signed by all important Foreign Office officials: Strang, Sargent, and Halifax. Vansittart added a handwritten note: "The French and we should make a clear and firm statement on Holland and Switzerland to settle the matter. The Germans are still relying on our weakness. But such a statement would destroy the illusion and clear the air while there is still time. But we have very little time to lose." (FO 371/22961, C 864, January 21, 1939.) Chamberlain's firm statement finally came on February 6, 1939.

Vansittart pushes for a tightening of English relations with Germany, basing his argument on Erich Kordt's old lie that Ribbentrop considers the English to be "weak." Two

Days later, Vansittart wrote to Halifax with the latest news he had received from strictly confidential German sources:

"Ribbentrop had told Hitler that Great Britain could be intimidated by threats into forcing France to accept Italy's demands—Tunis and Corsica—and he had convinced the Führer that at the decisive moment a majority of fear, in Ribbentrop's words, would prevail both in the Chamber of Deputies and among the French people... Ribbentrop had assured Berlin and Rome that the current British government would not support Daladier, but would instead make a compromise at France's expense." The Axis policy, Vansittart continued, was to convert France to fascism in order to drive England off the continent together with the Americans and isolate it, with Europe and Asia to be brought under German-Italian-Japanese control. In Germany, this was referred to as "the dismemberment of the British Empire." (Signed R. Vansittart, January 25, 1939, FO 371/22961, €196.)

Such reports often arrived at the Foreign Office several times a day and were intended to give new impetus to British policy. On January 26, Ashton-Gwatkin reported what he had heard from Dr. Schairer, Goerdeler's friend. According to Schairer, a major purge was imminent in Germany because Hitler wanted to get rid of his weak advisors. "Ribbentrop keeps hammering into Hitler that England is decadent and will accept anything." Kirkpatrick had reported the same thing. This lie was to be kept alive, even though the British knew that Ribbentrop had reported exactly the opposite to Hitler. All of the alleged plans are repeated by Schairer, including, for example, that Hitler had declared in a speech to young officers that "Alexander, Caesar, and Napoleon are nothing, and that he, Hitler, would be a Genghis Khan, and that incomparable power and glory were imminent for Germany." (FO 371/23005, C1097, signed Ashton-Gwatkin, January 27, 1939.) What Hitler is alleged to have said here, he did not say to Burckhardt, but to the Poles, namely that their plans "far surpass those of Alexander and Napoleon." (Burckhardt, Munich 1962, p. 368.) On the same day, Ogilvie-Forbes also reported to London that Conwell-Evans had told him that he knew from party sources that Hitler "intended, should

Italy not receive a commitment from France, to march westward, and that he would bypass the Maginot Line via Holland and Switzerland ... Ribbentrop would visit Warsaw and come to an agreement with the Poles." Halifax writes on this: "One must wonder that Schairer knew all the detailed plans of the dictatorship

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ren knows." On the same day, copies of the telegrams were sent to the Crown and to Chamberlain, "but to no one else." Cadogan again suggested that a summary of our information should now be sent to President Roosevelt. Sir Eric Phipps, Sir R. Clive, Sir N. Bland, Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes, and Sir G. Warner should also receive the same reports as secret and personal information. (FO 371/22962, C 1009, C 1196, telegram from Ogilvie-Forbes, January 26, 1939.)

On January 26, German Major von Schwerin also told a member of the British Embassy that a crisis was imminent. This time, he said, the army would stand behind Hitler because it had no other choice. Schwerin expressed his hope that England would "stand firm" and speak to Germany in no uncertain terms, as America was doing. When asked by his English host what Germany's goal was, Schwerin replied "world domination." Strang writes, "Schwerin's remarks are either a great betrayal or he has received orders from above to test our nerves to find out how far Hitler can bluff." Strang received the reply from the War Ministry that, in Mason-MacFarlane's opinion, Schwerin had not been instructed from above, but that his "indiscretion was due to the fact that he had only recently been appointed to his new position in the German War Ministry." (FO 371/22963. C 1291, January 26, 1939.)

Hitler spoke in the Reichstag on January 30. Halifax received a summary of this speech from Roberts. Thanks to the many rumors that had been spread, British government circles were well aware of the demand for repayment of the loans.

Hitler spoke in the Reichstag on January 30. Halifax received a summary of this speech from Roberts. Thanks to the many rumors that had been spread, British government circles had expected Germany to demand repayment of the "reparations" it had paid. But Hitler had only spoken of Germany's economic difficulties caused by the Treaty of Versailles and the burden of debt. Roberts wrote that exports must therefore be large enough to meet Germany's own needs. "In any case, no demand was made for repayment of the reparations paid." (Signed Roberts, January 31, 1939, FO 371/22963.) This report was submitted to the cabinet and finally summarized with Goerdeler's reports and forwarded to the leading officials of the Foreign Office.

In summary, the recommendations of the German conspirators were as follows: "The worst thing would be another success for Hitler, similar to Munich. Such an event would destroy the last hope of the moderates. The slightest concession on the smallest point would destroy resistance to the regime and at the same time increase the inner despair of the masses." The following demands were made:

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a) No further negotiations, but action.

b) Diplomatic relations are to be broken off in the event of new persecutions.

c) Radio broadcasts to the German people must be expanded and intensified.

d) If the democracies want to save themselves, they must recognize that Hitler is determined to conquer the world. That is why he will destroy Judaism, Christianity, and capitalism.

e) All his speeches about protection against Bolshevism are lies. For example, he has ordered complete state control of industry.

f) Clear and decisive action can still save the world from this terrible catastrophe. But now is the very last chance. (FO 371/22963. C 1290, February 1, 1939.)

Roberts writes on this: The recommendations to our country to take a firm stance and strengthen our radio propaganda are certainly well-intentioned. However, the author, Goerdeler, forgets how important it is for us to strengthen our radio propaganda.

Roberts writes: "The recommendations to our country to take a firm stance and strengthen our radio propaganda are certainly well-intentioned. However, the author, Goerdeler, forgets how important it is for us to maintain the good reputation of His Majesty's government and, in particular, that of the Prime Minister, because the German masses see in him a love of peace and moderation. If our steadfastness is emphasized too much, Hitler could undermine our reputation among the Germans." Sargent regrets that Dr. Goerdeler "wants to make our blood run cold by overestimating his own case."

Former Senate President Rauschning visits the Foreign Office

Also on February 1, 1939, Dr. Rauschning visited Foreign Office official F. A. Ashton-Gwatkin. The first Senate President of Danzig had left Germany in 1935 because he had "fallen out with the Nazis." That is why the British considered him "an honest and decent fellow." He, too, conflates the Munich Conference of September 30, 1938, with Kristallnacht in November 1938. England saw this as a never-ending source of propaganda. According to Rauschning, everything in Germany had taken a turn for the worse, "but the army could not change the regime until internal chaos or a war from outside demanded its intervention." Rauschning claimed to have "learned this personally from Brauchitsch and Keitel." He explained that British radio propaganda was good, but

must be doubled. It should be supplemented by letters and shortwave broadcasts from ships. The independence efforts in Austria, Bavaria, and Württemberg should be supported. Otto von Habsburg would provide assistance in this regard. Rauschning considered Hitler's "relatively mild last speech" to be unimportant. Hitler had further stated: "The French were 'degenerate', the British were shopkeepers and the Americans were talkers." Rauschning had also heard in German circles that Holland and Switzerland would be attacked in July or August. He considered an agreement between Hitler and Stalin possible. The Germans were convinced that Chamberlain was working for peace and therefore Chamberlain had become a symbol of peace for them. Hitler was radical, as were Himmler, Goebbels, Streicher, and Ribbentrop. Göring would join the army in the event of war or internal unrest. Dr. Rauschning believed that Germany could not sustain a long war, either morally or materially. Kirkpatrick writes about this Rauschning report that "it at least confirms the other information." Strang sees the main value of Rauschning's advice in maintaining Chamberlain's good reputation among the Germans. This could best be achieved if Chamberlain did not appear too belligerent, so that Hitler could not claim that "he was no better than Duff Cooper or Eden," but at the same time did not appear so weak that we could be denied any strength. Chamberlain's motto – "neither challenge nor appeasement, but defense" – seems to determine the middle line of British policy. (FO 371/23005, C

1323, February 1, 1939.)

This time, the French are "degenerate" and the British are "shopkeepers." It is interesting that Chamberlain was to continue playing the apostle of peace until the time came when he could portray Hitler as completely "unreliable," as he had already told his colleagues after his statement on September 30, 1939. Then all propaganda was to be geared toward defending the empire, even though no one, least of all Hitler, wanted to attack England.

No peace for Germany One day later, on February 2, 1939, Kirkpatrick sent an interpretation of Hitler's speech of January 30 to the Foreign

Office. According to this interpretation, the speech had been changed at the last minute.

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namely the passages on "colonies and Great Britain." Hitler had recognized the "very bad mood among the public and therefore spoken in a milder manner." This was explained by Brückelmeier, one of Ribbentrop's secretaries, to the press attaché at the British Embassy, R. F. Bashford, and confirmed by Albert von Kessel, one of Weizsäcker's associates. Kessel was the man who filed Weizsäcker's secret notes marked "No." in sealed envelopes in a tank cabinet and was also a close friend of Erich Kordt. Brückelmeier claimed to the British that he was "familiar with all of Ribbentrop's correspondence with Hitler." According to this, the Reich Chancellor had gained the impression that the mood since September 1938 had "deteriorated considerably," i.e., that Hitler would have to reckon with military intervention by England in a situation as explosive as the Czech crisis of the previous year. For this reason, Brückelmeier also believed that Hitler would not dare to go to war. (FO 371/22964, C 1403, signed Kirkpatrick, February 2, 1939.) Kirkpatrick did not report on the true mood in Germany, but rather on the views of his conspiratorial friends. Conwell-Evans did the same on the same day in a secret letter to Vansittart, who noted: "Prof. Conwell-Evans, who was recently in Germany, received the attached memorandum from a very prominent German in January." The German regretted that the English and French statesmen "constantly emphasized their desire for peace, because this encouraged the other side to take warlike steps, so that the dictatorial powers believed they could do whatever they wanted." In any case, the view in Germany was that "England can do nothing." As always, it was claimed that the Hitler government could only hold on to power through a "series of successes," because peace would expose its weaknesses. The German people were asking: "Why a secret police? Why sacrifices? Why economic restrictions? etc." Then the usual advice was given on how to defeat Hitler: "The regime would fall if its glory were not confirmed by new successes, i.e., in the colonial question. What Germany needs cannot therefore be given to it, especially not peace." That was the be-all and end-all of British statecraft: no peace for Germany! The German went on to report in his memorandum that Hitler believed he had until 1940. There were no "concrete reasons for hostility, but there was fundamental rivalry between England and Germany." England wanted to be strong.

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remain in order to "fight against the danger of decline." Concessions and sacrifices toward Germany were pointless, as they would only strengthen Hitler enormously. This was regretted by the "moderate elements in Germany, because England had not succeeded in weakening Hitler." Conwell-Evans' German interlocutor predicted that the final battle would take place in 1939 and could begin without a shot being fired. As one of the "those in the know," he predicted an extraordinary "development to change the situation." He was undoubtedly referring to the promised coup in Germany. Foreign Office

official Roberts was most interested in the fact that Hitler believed he had until 1940. (FO 371/22980, C 1544, February 2, 1939, signed Vansittart.) The document was also read by Kirkpatrick, Jebb, Strang, and Sargent. One of the marginal notes reads: Now we need "talk without a word of peace."

Daladier on Chamberlain: A "withered stick."

While the British government was being advised almost daily by the German conspirators not to come to any agreement with Hitler, Bullitt reported from Paris to US Secretary of State Hull on the situation in France: Following Chamberlain's visit to Rome, Daladier believed that Chamberlain had promised the Italians "French concessions" that he wanted to broker. He "did not believe" the English assurances that this had not happened. On the contrary, Daladier expected to be "betrayed" by the English, as this was the "usual fate of all British allies." Chamberlain was a "withered stick," the king a "moron," and the queen cared about nothing other than remaining "Queen Elizabeth of England." He considered Eden a "young idiot" and said he did not know a single Englishman whose abilities and character he respected. Daladier felt that England had become "so weak and senile that the British would rather give up every position of their friends than fight against Germany and Italy." As far as Germany was concerned, Daladier believed that Hitler would not support Italy's demands on France. This actually came to pass, because after the invasion of France in 1940, Hitler categorically rejected Italy's demands for French territory.

Bullitt further reported that England had made an "official inquiry to the French government as to what its attitude would be in the event of a German attack on Holland." While Daladier replied that he would then immediately attack Germany, Chamberlain stated that he would convene a tripartite committee to discuss the matter. Daladier believed that Russia was becoming "weaker and weaker." Litvinov had suggested that France should buy aircraft in the Soviet Union instead of America, but Russian aircraft were not good enough to be used in a war against Germany. With regard to China, Daladier believed that Chiang Kai-shek would remain in power for a long time. He then told Bullitt that he wanted to buy about 200 aircraft in America. He would like to send Aviation Minister Guy La Chambre to Washington as ambassador because he considered the current French representative to be an "idiot." These reports were sent in eight telegrams to the State Department in Washington on February 6, 1939. (Department of State, Bullitt to Hull, Paris, February 6, 1939, No. 222.)

"Our German friends still have hope."

On the same day, February 7, 1939, Vansittart reported exciting news to Halifax: a "reliable source" had confirmed that preparations in Germany between "mid-February and March 3 had been completed." Ribbentrop had fought very hard for an agreement in Warsaw, but the outcome was still uncertain. Schacht had informed Halifax and probably also Montague Norman about the internal situation in Germany. The struggle for power in Germany was continuing, especially between Himmler and Ribbentrop against Göring. The Reichswehr was to be turned into a "militia" with two years of service, while "Himmler's SS would become a long-standing regular military organization with artillery, tanks, etc. He also demanded his own air force." Göring would be removed from his position as head of the air force and replaced by Keitel. "Göring had too much power in his hands." The "English radio broadcasts in German were very effective. It would be desirable to broadcast even more harsh speeches emphasizing the strength of British rearmament, the change in the

English public opinion, etc., etc." Within the party, the collapse of France was expected, and great hopes were pinned on Flandin and Bonnet, who had openly committed themselves to Ribbentrop. Vansittart reports that our "friends in Germany are extremely depressed" about this development. They fear that the Chamberlain cabinet will not take a strong course in time. If France becomes fascist, the continental blockade will be called into question.

The German transport system was poor and the western fortifications were not yet complete. France was being "unnerved by propaganda and bluff." But England should not only stand firm against the bluff, "it should bluff more itself." This was the eternally unchanging advice of the German conspirators. The German informant also warned of a possible agreement between Hitler and Stalin and ended his report with the dramatic words: "The immediate future will decide whether all our work has been in vain and cannot be continued, or whether we will finally achieve tangible success and see a turning point in the fate of our civilization. Our friends still have hope and are continuing their work toward this goal." (FO 371/22964, C 1709, February 7, 1939, signed by R. Vansittart, countersigned by Ingrim, Jebb, Roberts, and Halifax.)

One of the most important conspirators for England was State Secretary von Weizsäcker, who, as is well known, had already informed Halifax in a secret message in September 1938 that Hitler would be eliminated immediately in the event of war breaking out. He now declared to Temperly, then correspondent for the Daily Telegraph, that his own position in Germany was "very difficult." In anticipation of the coup, he expressed his conviction that "there would be no war this year." (FO 371/22765, C 1979, February 9, 1939, Temperley to Cadogan.) The British press attaché in Berlin, R. F. Bashford, had been told by a German from the Reich Foreign Minister's circle that "Ribbentrop was extremely anti-British" and was doing everything he could to influence Hitler in this direction. He had succeeded in convincing Hitler that British policy had always been anti-German and that England was therefore "enemy No. 1." Bashford's informant was Kordt, whose name is handwritten in this memorandum. Kordt told Bashford that "war enthusiasm among the German people had not only failed to increase since September, but had considerably diminished." England must therefore support this "lack of enthusiasm."

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zen." Hitler had not gone to war last September only because he felt that "the people were not behind him." Even now, he feared "handing out guns to the population, because they might turn them against him." Strang wrote to Ogilvie-Forbes, who had sent him Bashford's notes: "These kinds of reports—about conversations with members of Ribbentrop's personal staff—are very useful to us, and we would appreciate it if you would share with us anything else you come across of this nature." (FO 371/22980, C 1960, signed R. F. Bashford, January 30, 1939.) Bashford's memo was also signed by Kirkpatrick and Sargent.

It seems grotesque that the English statesmen took the reports of the German traitor Kordt so seriously and demanded more and more of them. This can only be explained by the fact that they needed Kordt's recommendations as a guideline for their policy.

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Germany wants peace

"Avoid giving the impression that we want to incite the German nation against its leaders."

In mid-February, Henderson gave a "peaceful speech" before the German-English Society, whose president was the Duke of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha. After this speech, Aschmann, press chief at the Foreign Office, brought him the news that England had announced a doubling of its armament expenditures and asked how he could reconcile this with his peace speech. The ambassador noted on a piece of paper: "Peace is only secure when England is able to defend itself," and gave permission for this to be published. Henderson's remarks about the "two great nations, Germany and England" culminated in the realization: "Both sides have recognized that an increase in mutual trade is necessary. The leaders of German and English industry will begin negotiations shortly. We will, of course, follow these efforts with the greatest interest." He was convinced that Hitler agreed with this passage in his speech. After several months of vacation, he returned to Germany and informed Ribbentrop that he was suffering from tongue cancer but was convinced that he would be cured by radium treatment. Ribbentrop had shown great sympathy and had been friendlier than ever. He, Henderson, would send his wife "flowers to bring about a better understanding." (FO 800/294, signed Nevile Henderson, February 16, 1939.)

Before this dinner, which was hosted by the German-English Society and which Ribbentrop was unable to attend, Henderson had once again warned Halifax in a handwritten letter not to make a distinction in public speeches "between the German nation as a whole and its leaders."

If this would be useful, he would also be in favor of it. But, he continues:

"Historical experience has shown that it is generally a mistake to take sides in an internal struggle, because such interventions usually have the opposite effect. Whatever private individuals may say or do, we should avoid at all costs giving the impression that we are supporting the German nation

against their leaders as long as we are not finally convinced that nothing else can be expected from Hitler but war. I am not sure that we can say that today..." (FO 800/315, signed Nevile Henderson, February 8, 1939.)

At the same time as warning Halifax not to let himself be caught supporting the German conspirators, Henderson wrote to his American colleague, the Berlin ambassador Hugh R. Wilson, who had not yet returned to Washington from his ostentatious recall from Berlin in November 1938:

"My final impression since my return a week ago is that Germany wants peace, and that Hitler wants it too. I recently saw Göring and Ribbentrop, as well as others, who all gave me the same impression. Whatever the situation may have been in December or January, everyone emphasizes that things have improved. However, if Hitler goes too far—goes off the deep end—or if we make mistakes like we did on May 21, the situation will change. But I don't believe all the stories that Hitler is planning great adventures. Militarily and politically, he is stronger today than he will be next year, and therefore one might believe that he will strike this year. The constant expansion of our military defenses is the answer to this, not the panic of a coward. The German economic situation is extremely bad, but there are two ways to deal with it: either a political adventure... or a return to greater orthodoxy. Personally, I believe that Hitler will choose the latter, and I believe that it would be wiser for us to encourage him in this regard rather than discourage him by treating Germany like a pariah. One thing is certain: the Nazi regime will not be overthrown by external opposition ... Consequently, we should not treat Germany as

a pariah if we do not want it to behave like a pariah." (Signed Nevile Henderson, February 20, 1939. Hugh R. Wilson Estate, Herbert Hoover Memorial Library, West Branch, Iowa, USA.)

Henderson rejected his government's policy because it was clearly intended to drive Hitler to extremes and because it was based on dangerous secret connections to the German conspirators. Vansittart thought quite differently. In a letter to Halifax dated February 20, he recommended that Chamberlain build a stronger front against the Axis powers. He based this recommendation on a letter from a German informant who was "in close contact with the German General Staff and wanted a change in the political situation." However, this could only be achieved through a number of "really strong speeches" by Chamberlain and Halifax. The time had come to strengthen our position "while

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Germany is obviously hesitating." He had learned from his secret sources: "1. That the Eastern adventure has been postponed; 2. that the mobilization of February 15 has apparently been postponed; 3. that Mussolini has postponed his threatening speech; 4. that Hitler seems to be considering taking the easy way out and devouring the remnants of unfortunate Czechoslovakia." This information came from Conwell-Evans, who had just returned from Germany.

German informants

Conwell-Evans, who was in close contact with the German General Staff, had tested the "officer corps," which was generally convinced that England, like France, "would not take the risk of war." The German officer corps had "no high opinion" of England, and this made "real opposition to Hitler's policy impossible." Furthermore, no senior officer would take the liberty of criticizing Hitler because, since Munich, it could no longer be proven that he was pursuing a dangerous course. Despite this attitude among the officer corps, Conwell-Evans received the following advice:

"The British Prime Minister should nevertheless activate the internal opposition in Germany to such an extent that Hitler finds himself in a very threatening situation. Chamberlain should take a clearer and more energetic stance against the blackmail and bluffs of the Axis powers... Further concessions to the pirates would make war or humiliation inevitable... You English are wrong when you say that 'peace was saved in Munich'. Hitler and the regime were saved because they could not fight France, England, and Czechoslovakia at the same time without being swept away immediately by a revolution in Germany. The latest news I can report is that the German government wants to avoid a violent confrontation with France at the moment. Firstly, because of the railway transport crisis and secondly, to keep France in a state of doubt and uncertainty... and with the help of the Flandin-Bonnet group to gain power over the country without war." (FO 371/22765, C 2209, signed R. Vansittart, February 20, 1939.)

This German reported that "our unpredictable leader is thinking one step closer to home, to a punitive expedition against Prague. This is being discussed in high places." A punitive expedition against Prague did not take place, but an agreement was reached with Hacha.

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Churchill to Roosevelt: "Beat the drums of war"

It is well known that Roosevelt had been fully informed of British intentions, so that he too was

expecting a coup against Hitler. On February 27, in the presence of his former secretary Robert Boothby, Churchill gave an interview to William Stix Wasserman, which H. A. Wallace, US Secretary of Agriculture and later US Vice President (1941-45), sent personally to the American president. Churchill began the conversation by praising Roosevelt, who in his recent statements had encouraged the French and British to take a firmer stance. Churchill felt that Hitler had now reached the "height of his military power and would from now on be weaker in relation to England and France. Therefore, it was logical to strike now!" The French would not give in to the dictators again, as they had done in Munich. "Now is the time to restore French honor." As for Chamberlain, he was being forced to follow Churchill's line more and more. But Chamberlain still had the decisive influence in England. He could count on the votes of women and certain supporters who obeyed him blindly. He still controlled the Conservative Party, and this was extremely important. At the moment, there was more than a 50% chance of war. The fighting would mainly take place in the Mediterranean region. At the decisive moment, Italy would be at the center of the fighting. "The Maginot Line was strong enough to keep the Germans out of France." Hitler would probably attack Romania first. Anglo-French supremacy at sea was so great that Italy could be completely surrounded. This would be a further burden for Germany because it would have to support its allies with its limited economic reserves. Air raids could kill 50,000 English women and children and bring the United States to Britain's side. Turkey, Russia, Romania, Yugoslavia, Poland, and even Czechoslovakia would probably become allies of the Western powers. Hitler and Mussolini were forced to pursue a policy of expansion out of "fear of internal difficulties." At the end of the conversation, Churchill sent his regards to his friend Reynaud and told him that no one in England liked Bonnet, especially after he had declared that Italy had "justified grievances." One never knew where the French really stood,

after they had sold the Czechs. If war had broken out in October 1938, victory would have been easy. The loss of 40 Czech divisions and the completion of the Siegfried Line had not been offset by London's improved defensive measures, nor by the Luftwaffe.

Churchill advised Roosevelt to continue "beating the drums of war" and rebuking the dictators. Only fear of America could hold Mussolini and Hitler back. Franco was just as imperialistic as the other dictators, he wanted to wrest Morocco from the French and considered democracies "corrupt and ripe for destruction." Churchill also mentioned Sir Horace Wilson, Chamberlain's "alter ego," whom he did not seem to admire. Wasserman, Churchill's interlocutor, saw him as a "kind of English Cardinal Richelieu." With his influence on Chamberlain and the government, Wilson was playing "a rather deceptive game." (Signed William Stix Wasserman, February 27, 1939, Wallace to F.D.R., Agriculture Department, Washington. F.D. Roosevelt Estate. PSF: Agriculture, Hyde Park, New York/USA.) At the beginning of March, Rauschning also reported back to London. He did not say much that was new, except that the US had to help. {FO 371/22966, C 2680, letter from Prof. Ernest Barker to Butler, March 1, 1939.)

Vansittart's middleman: Professor Conwell-Evans

At the end of February, the very special agent Prof. Conwell-Evans returned from Germany and drafted a memorandum that Van- sittart wanted to present to Secretary of State Halifax. Everything Conwell-Evans had to report naturally came from the German conspiracy circle. Hitler and Ribbentrop were "more hostile than ever" toward England. Hitler would prefer to pursue a "Chinese Wall policy" to protect his people from Western democratic influences. Hitler intended to grant Bohemia and Moravia a kind of autonomy under German sovereignty. He was trying to separate France from England. This

had filled his German friends – the conspirators – with the greatest fear, especially since Bonnet was head of the French Foreign Ministry.

Many German industries were close to collapse, as was the railway system, which was short of 3,000 locomotives and 30,000 wagons. Conwell-Evans was said to be one of the "moderate Germans."

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civil servants" who were still in office, and by business leaders, that "His Majesty's government remain firm in its stance toward Germany." Franco told Hitler that he was grateful for his great support, but that he had been forced to declare Spain's neutrality in September of last year. Hitler replied that he expected no more than "benevolent neutrality" from Spain. Conwell-Evans naturally reports only negative things about his conversations with Ribbentrop in the presence of Hewel and Lorenz, whom "Weizsäcker had earmarked as his successor." Ribbentrop showed no gratitude for Chamberlain's efforts the previous year, but instead declared: "Without England's interference, the Czech question would not have led to a crisis." He had supported Italy's territorial demands and was gradually becoming "megalomaniacal." In contrast, the "moderates" in the Foreign Office and the representatives of heavy industry were very keen to establish friendly relations with England.

Conwell-Evans then sharply criticizes Sir Nevile Henderson. "Influential German business leaders avoid the ambassador and tell him nothing of what they tell me." Henderson has no contact with the "real Germans, so many of whom are my long-standing friends." Conwell-Evans' "real Germans who were still in service" belonged to the circle of conspirators. Finally, Conwell-Evans emphasizes once again that his "friends in official positions live in an atmosphere of terror. That is why the utmost secrecy of this memorandum is necessary." (FO 371/23006, C 2762, February 24, 1939, sent by Vansittart to Halifax.) Vansittart also recommended to Halifax that Conwell-Evans' name be kept strictly secret, because all of his informants were personally known to him. Halifax, however, ordered an investigation into whether it was true that all leave had been suspended in the German army and air force. The British War Office knew nothing about this and believed that these were "stories" based on "poorly substantiated or incomplete information." (FO 371/23006, C 2462 and DBFP IV, p. 238 note 4.)

The falsified Ribbentrop speech to German officers

On March 9, 1939, Vansittart sent a secret report full of falsehoods about Ribbentrop's January speech to German

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officers. "Hitler sees England as his main enemy... In his attempt to redistribute the world in Germany's favor, he will isolate Great Britain. He will force France into the Germany-Italy-Spain axis. The struggle for world domination will be fought between the Western democracies and the anti-Comintern group. In view of Colonel Beck's upcoming trip to London, the Führer will not allow himself to be slowly checkmated by British diplomacy." Vansittart further noted that Ribbentrop had emphasized that Hitler's foreign policy, in its "brutality," would quickly eliminate the weaker and old-fashioned British methods and destroy England's prestige in Eastern and Southeastern Europe. The Führer had told Czech Foreign Minister Chwalkowsky during his recent visit that he would put an end to the

unreliability of Prague's foreign policy. As a guarantee of a future pro-German policy, the Czech gold reserves would have to be handed over to the Reichsbank. The major Prague banks would have to subscribe to a German government bond of approximately half a billion marks. The Czech armed forces would have to be reduced and certain Czech fortifications handed over to the German army. If Prague did not agree to this, it would be given a "short ultimatum." Ribbentrop added that "active resistance by the Western powers was unthinkable"! Objections could come at most from Poland or Romania. "Italy, Germany, and Spain would launch a political offensive against France." If Franco opposed this reorganization of Europe, he would be eliminated.

All these demands, Ribbentrop said, should be "made very sharply and provocatively." Then a civil war might break out, in which Mussolini could assert his claims on France. The only salvation for France lay in the person of Caillaux, "who hates England and desires nothing more than a new Europe under the leadership of Adolf Hitler and excluding Great Britain." In this context, Ribbentrop explained, Germany could separate France from England without the use of force. The new weapons were the "intellectual forces in which class hatred played a leading role. Propaganda was at the forefront. This would wear down the Western powers through radio broadcasts in English and French. Under the slogan "Workers of all countries, unite," the slogan "Germany must be destroyed" would be repeated over and over again.

emphasized "that only the capitalist system is responsible for unemployment." Thus, Adolf Hitler would become "the drummer of Europe, building a new Europe, perhaps without war, just as he had founded a new Germany without a sword." Ribbentrop is said to have assured his listeners that all demands "of the anti-Comintern powers were based on common sense, because they sought only a legitimate balance between the haves and the have-nots. Only in this way could peace be maintained." (FO 371/22966, C 3097, sent by Vansittart to Halifax on March 9, 1939.)

Sir John Simon was not fooled by this obvious falsification of Ribbentrop's speech, but wrote to Halifax on March 13:

Sir John Simon was not fooled by this obvious falsification of Ribbentrop's speech, but wrote to Halifax on March 13:

"I always find it difficult to regard these documents, which are aimed at wearing us down, as genuine. Ribbentrop & Co. must be very inept if they cannot communicate their worst secret intentions to the German General Staff without the whole thing being betrayed by an 'ear witness'. I cannot forget the very detailed information that came from sources described as both reliable and anonymous regarding what would happen this month of March. Be that as it may, even if the news in the document is not true, it is definitely the kind of news that those who fear we may be too friendly with Hitler want us to believe." (FO 800/315, March 13, 1939, signed John Simon.)

Simon clearly recognizes here that all these nerve-wracking documents originated from the German conspiracy circle that was constantly urging England to take a hard line with Germany. Since Ribbentrop was unaware of this, he could not prevent his speech from being completely distorted and conveyed to the British through treacherous machinations in his entourage and in the German General Staff, just as had happened with his report A 5522 through Kordt.

Simons' fundamental criticism of all reports from secret "sources" referred not only to the falsified

content of Ribbentrop's speech, but also to a memorandum by Anthony Rothschild. This memorandum repeated all the rumors that the Foreign Office received on a daily basis, including the occupation of Switzerland or Holland in the spring of 1939, with the addition of a supplement that Ribbentrop was said to have negotiated with Caillaux in Paris: France would receive French-speaking Switzerland and the Walloon part of Belgium in compensation for its territorial concessions to Italy. The rest of Belgium

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Greece would become part of a "Greater Holland" under Flemish rule. German-speaking Switzerland would be annexed to the Reich and Italian-speaking Switzerland to the Italian state. (FO 800/315, Sir John Simon to Halifax, March 13, 1939.)

The conspirators are ready

Vansittart's daily reports to Halifax also include a "secret" memorandum from one of the "best informed and most reliable sources of information from Germany," presumably written by Conwell-Evans and sent to Halifax on March 8. Once again, it is reported that Italy intends to launch a "coup" against Corsica and Tunis with the help of German troops in the near future. Germany is planning to invade Holland in order to occupy Belgium and France from there. The date on which German troops are to be ready to march was originally set for "early February, then later for February 20, changed again to February 28, and now zero hour is mid-March." The traitor Wiede- mann also has his say in Conwell-Evans' secret letter: "Hitler shows a burning hatred for Roosevelt because he is the only statesman who has seen through him." Conwell-Evans then gives personal advice on the unrest in the rest of Czechoslovakia:

"There is only one way to resolve the crisis: Hitler must be confronted with mobilization and an ultimatum as soon as he makes the first move. The German people must not be left in any doubt about Britain's intentions to fight, otherwise there is a serious danger that the military circles in Germany, which are very reluctant to engage in a show of force in Western Europe, will be convinced of England's weakness, which Hitler keeps telling them about. In the event of mobilization, you can rest assured that the first day of mobilization will mark the beginning of Germany's disintegration from within, provided that the Western powers maintain an absolutely firm stance. This disintegration will reach such military, economic, and moral proportions that the Western powers will no longer be able to understand how they could ever have been afraid of this gigantic but completely hollow bogeyman." (FO 371/22966, C 3096, March 8, 1939, Vansittart to Halifax.)

This secret report was read and signed by Kirkpatrick, Sargent, Jebb, Ingrim, and Roberts. The latter noted by hand: "Many of the statements are not entirely correct, e.g.

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considered the British people to be decadent and doomed to perish. His experience of Chamberlain and his assorLat:n had strengthened him in this view. He further told Kepler that this was why he could easily hold him in the Chamber to his own advantage. wWwrens later in a talk with Captain viederumn Hitler» shoveä a buming hatrei of Nooszvelt nn un EEE eu becmuse he onildl he was the only ntatesman so Tur un) had seon thraush hin The orders to the press aro thay Im chanberlein is to be treaten in a £riendly mannor so lorn,, a5 he opealis or acts in the sense of the Tunich Anglo-Temmen Dedaration, but as soon as Charberlain ah;uld oyealt fimly in a difTeront sense the whole German press

rust en hir: charnly. It is interesting to note that the English translation of the Inzlich book entitled "The Chanberlain" by A. Sn. Petrie was first given an excellent prose translation, but recently the publisher received instructions from the Propaganda Ministry in Berlin to stop the publication and discourage sales.

One thing should be carefully borne in mind as regards the question of armaments, namely that Hitler, with his present warlike mentality, is firmly convinced that "all Christian states must unite to destroy the Jewish state."

One thing should be carefully borne in mind as regards the question of armaments, namely that Hitler, with his present warlike mentality, is firmly convinced that all statements regarding the size and condition of British rearmament are false.

Finally, as a great friend of Britain, I would like to add that there is only one way to solve this serious problem, and that is to confront Hitler with a clear ultimatum as soon as he makes his move.

The German people should not be 1c?% for once, mimuie In üuw

From document FO 371/22966, C 3096, March 8, 1939

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Troop reductions near Klagenfurt, khaki uniforms for German colonial troops, etc., but the general picture may nevertheless be accurate." This Conwell-Evans memorandum was handed over to a representative of Morton from the I. I. € "because further dissemination is highly desirable."

Fourteen days later, Vansittart still had not received a reply from Halifax to this memorandum from Conwell-Evans. He therefore wrote again on March 13, placing greater emphasis on the recommendations of the German conspirators: The German "activist group" was prepared to resist any order for a hopeless war. "Several officers had been named to him." A great change had taken place in Germany and a new "morale" had emerged. The current "moral leadership" consisted of a few prominent figures in the church and the army.

"Western democracies have no stronger ally than this moral awakening. Listening to radio broadcasts from Strasbourg and Luxembourg is a source of hope, strength, and joy for millions. However, the German activists demanded a clearer and stronger statement of British intentions:

a) The decision of the democracies to resist any further threat of war.

b) The will to cooperate morally and practically to maintain peace.

c) An appeal to the German people that they will certainly find friends if, after a certain transitional period, they renounce their military strength. The most important thing now is close cooperation between England, France, and America. In certain circles in Germany, Roosevelt is considered the best European. But Chamberlain also enjoys great respect among people who are hostile to the party. (FO 371/23006, C 3199, March 13, 1939, signed Vansittart; m. Sp.)

Vansittart added to his report the latest secret information he had received from an informant who "spoke with a director-general of the German War Ministry in Switzerland on March 10." This

informant reported that Bohemia and Moravia would be occupied between March 12 and 19. The German government and "this time also the army and the general staff were convinced that England would not interfere under any circumstances and that France would therefore not take any military action." Mussolini would keep quiet. When asked what England and France should do after a "violent occupation of the rest of Czechoslovakia" in order to "best discredit Hitler before his own nation,"

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The German ministerial director from the War Ministry replied:

"If, after the occupation of Prague and other points by the German army on Hitler's orders, England and France do not take clear steps ... the German people and the active and latent opposition will lose all courage and initiative. I consider the following steps to be the minimum that the German people expect:

1. Sharp attacks in the press and on the radio against Hitler, who constantly breaks his word and declares to the whole world that he will not make any further territorial demands in Europe after the annexation of the Sudeten German territories. This denunciation, skillfully interwoven with the facts, will make a great impression when announced by the British Prime Minister.

2. The British and French ambassadors, and if possible the American ambassador as well, should be recalled from Berlin and all ongoing negotiations broken off... No loans should be granted to the Reich government by Great Britain, because this would be seen as a sign of weakness on the part of England." (FO 371/22966, C 3234, March 13, 1939. Signed: Vansittart.)

In the same document, the conspirator from the War Ministry demands that Chamberlain should declare in a speech that Hitler has torn up the Munich Agreement (ibid.). Chamberlain, however, did not follow this instruction for the time being, but declared after the conclusion of the Hitler-Hacha Pact that this arrangement did not violate the Munich Agreement. He was to be seen as a friend of Germany for as long as possible. This combination of the two demands of the German conspirators obviously embarrassed the British government. The Foreign Office considered how Chamberlain, after publicly stating on March 15 that the establishment of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia was not a breach of the Munich Agreement, could now claim the opposite. This was no problem for Chamberlain. On March 17, he said exactly the opposite of what he had declared to the world two days earlier!

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From Hacha's visit to the British guarantee for Poland

The remnants of Czechoslovakia in March 1939

The situation in Czechoslovakia was by no means clear after the cession of the Sudetenland. The other nationalities living in the state now also sought autonomy and independence, as Hitler had predicted to Chamberlain in his first Berchtesgaden talks. An autonomous Slovak government was formed by Dr. Tiso in Bratislava on October 6, 1938, and was approved by the central government in Prague under the direct influence of the Munich Agreement. Shortly thereafter, an autonomous government was also formed in Carpathian Ukraine, which was likewise recognized by Prague.

The economic problems of the remaining Czechoslovakia became increasingly difficult because the valuable Sudeten regions were missing. Already in February 1939, the Slovak leader Prof. Tuka had approached Adolf Hitler without any involvement from the German side and, in a meeting he had requested, declared that further coexistence between the Slovaks and the Czechs was economically and morally impossible. Tuka said, "I place the fate of my people in your hands, my leader. My people expect their complete liberation from you." The ensuing negotiations between Prague and Pressburg were fruitless and were finally exacerbated by the formation of a new Slovak cabinet under Sidor on March 11, 1939. The new cabinet was met with rejection and resistance from the national Slovaks. The Czechs used Prague military and Moravian police to crack down on the demonstrating Slovaks. Violence and arrests ensued. In response, the incumbent Prime Minister Tiso contacted the German government and arrived in Berlin on March 13 to speak with Hitler in the presence of Ribbentrop. During the negotiations, it was reported that Hungary was threatening to invade Carpathian Ukraine, which it ultimately did on March 14. On the same day, Tiso proclaimed the independence of the Slovaks in Pressburg, and the following day, March 15, Tiso requested Hitler to assume protection of the Slovak state. This protection treaty was ratified on March 23, 1939.

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One day before the Slovaks declared independence, Foreign Office official Roberts had drafted an "Expert Opinion on the Position of the British Government with Regard to the Slovak Crisis" on March 13. (DBFP IV, No. 230.) Roberts discusses the unsatisfactory situation of the Slovaks within the remaining Czechoslovakia and notes that "until recently there had been no signs of German intervention, but that, on the contrary, Berlin had ceded valuable Slovak territories to Hungary in the Vienna Award." Hitler had so far left Dr. Tiso's "imploring request" for support unanswered. Roberts warns against British interference in the affairs of the rest of Czechoslovakia, because a change in that state is an "internal constitutional matter in which we have no direct involvement"! If Germany avoids an attack, the British government has no locus standi, i.e., no legal means of preventing Hitler from reaching peaceful agreements with the Slovaks or the Czechs.

This is a crucial statement, because, as is well known, according to the memoranda of Conwell-Evans and other agents, the German conspirators had always given their advice to the British on the assumption that there would be a violent occupation of the rest of Czechoslovakia.

After the Slovaks declared independence, President Hacha requested a "personal meeting" with Hitler through his Foreign Minister Chwalkowsky on March 14. (DdP 7, 5.498.) On the evening of the same day, Chamberlain sent a telegram to Henderson instructing him to inform the German government immediately that the British government "did not wish to interfere unnecessarily in matters in which other governments might have a more immediate interest than England." (DBFP IV, No. 247.) The ambassador went to Wilhelmstrasse that same night and communicated the official British disinterest in the impending agreements between Hitler and Hacha. (DBFP IV, No. 232.)

Without the guarantee from the Western powers and without the promised continuation of the "French loans," Hacha found himself in such dire political and economic straits that he was unable to prevent the Slovaks from declaring independence and the Hungarians from rushing in. Abandoned by England and France, he therefore saw no other way out on March 14, 1939, than to seek annexation by Germany if he did not want to fall under Soviet influence. With Hacha's consent...

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With the knowledge of his government and its approval by telephone, an agreement was reached between him and Hitler on March 15 to annex Bohemia and Moravia to the German Reich as a protectorate. The Hitler-Hacha Pact stipulated that no Czech would be conscripted into military service, either in peace or in war, and this provision remained in force throughout the Second World War. Hacha remained president until the Soviet army marched in and died in a Prague prison on June 1, 1945.

After the conclusion of the pact, Chamberlain declared, as already stated, on March 15, 1939, that this arrangement did not constitute a breach of the Munich Agreement and that the British government was no longer bound by its obligations toward the rest of Czechoslovakia. The Prime Minister said verbatim:

"This state, whose borders we intended to guarantee, has broken down from within and has thus come to an end." (Hohlfeld, Vol. 5, Doc. 8, p. 24.)

At the same time, Halifax also expressed his satisfaction to the French ambassador Corbin in London about the events in Prague, because they had brought "the somewhat embarrassing obligation of the English guarantee to a natural end." (DBFP IV, Doc. 280.) In France, some were embittered by the loss of this ally, who had offered the Allies their "last chance" to take action against Germany. (Freund I], Doc. 1.) Since the British government did not and could not protest, the dissatisfied members of the Foreign Office resorted to the advice that Vansittart had famously presented to Halifax three days earlier, on March 13. On the basis of the secret report from a director-general in the War Ministry in Berlin, which has already been quoted, Vansittart demanded the following in the event that the "Germans either occupied Prague or drove the Czechs into further dissolution or serfdom":

1. A statement by the Prime Minister and by you, Halifax, that Hitler has torn up the Munich Agreement.

2. The recall of Sir N. Henderson – for consultations, if you wish – but in any case he must remain away for at least a few months.

3. Cancellation of the trade commission to Berlin. It won't achieve much anyway, but it would be humiliating for us, not only in Europe but also in the United States, if we were now – should the coup take place this week – to send such a delegation to these criminals, whose hands are still bloody and who have just, in front of the whole world,

world have been driven into our horrified faces. I would like to reiterate that the effect on Mussolini could also be serious and dangerous.

I came to this conclusion independently, but I am now pleased that it coincides exactly with the views of high-ranking German officials. See attached memorandum." (FO 371/22966, C 3234, March 13, 1939, signed Vansittart.)

Vansittart's "high-ranking German officials" who shared his views were the conspirators who forced the British Prime Minister to cross the "Rubicon" and make the tragic "turn" in British policy that made war inevitable. He was to make the statement that Hitler had torn up the Munich Agreement. The

ambassador in Berlin was to be recalled and all ongoing negotiations broken off. Chamberlain therefore had to speak a second time to fulfill these demands of the German conspirators. Already on March 16, Vansittart was sent to Soviet Ambassador Maisky to inform him of the "turn in British policy that the Birmingham speech would bring." (Colvin, Vansittart...., p. 294£.)

One day later, on March 17, Chamberlain actually gave the speech demanded by the German conspirators in his hometown of Birmingham. At the suggestion of German circles, he said exactly the opposite of what he had publicly declared on March 15. At the outset, he apologized for his trips to Berchtesgaden, Godesberg, and Munich, admitting that even after a victorious war, Czechoslovakia could never be restored in its Versailles form. He then went on to accuse the German government of the Hitler-Hacha Pact, which he had approved not only in advance but also after it had been concluded, because he — Chamberlain — "had not been consulted as a co-signatory of the Munich Agreement." In doing so, he concealed from the world public that it was he himself who had not wanted such consultation when, on March 14—even before Hacha's departure from Prague—he had officially informed the German government that his government was not interested in questions affecting Berlin and Prague! In the policy of Chamberlain, who himself had prevented consultation but nevertheless accused Germany of not consulting him, "something must have been wrong," as Ribbentrop had already told Henderson when England refused to agree to autonomy for the Sudeten Germans in the summer of 1938. Chamberlain further described the "separation of the Sudeten region" as

an unpleasant surprise, even though he himself, together with Daladier, had forced the Benesch government to voluntarily cede this part of Czechoslovakia ten days before Munich, on September 19, 1938. Then, in his speech on March 17, 1939, Chamberlain asked the whole world the provocative question of whether the agreement between Berlin and Prague was Hitler's first attempt to "rule the world by force." (Freund II, Doc. 9.)

Vansittart: "Catastrophic if we lose the German 'moderates'"

Shortly after the Birmingham speech, Vansittart was able to present another report from the conspirators, which had been sent to his friend Colonel Christie. In his accompanying letter, he asks Halifax to pay particular attention to the "declining reputation of the moderate Germans." Everything in the report was true and confirmed by the highest authorities. He would send Halifax "their statements tomorrow and give their names." The most important point in the undated report by a German was:

"The prestige of the Western democracies is very unsatisfactory in the Reich today. The invasion of Czechoslovakia certainly came very suddenly, but our friends in the large circle of moderate Germans are certain that this time a strong counteraction by your country and France will follow. It is true that your Prime Minister spoke much more strongly against Germany in Birmingham than he has done in the past, but many parts of his speech were completely unconvincing. For example, when he declared that there was hardly anything he would not sacrifice for peace, with one exception—the freedom of Great Britain. Our friends believe that behind such words a whole series of new Munichs could be justified until it was finally Britain's turn... Needless to say, both Hitler and Ribbentrop are completely convinced that, come what may, England will do nothing as long as its own interests are not harmed. Therefore, my friend, you must realize that mistrust of your country's intentions is growing daily among the large bloc of moderate Germans...

If you and France do not stand firmly together and immediately take a decisive stance against the

dictators' arbitrary power, you will very soon witness the complete collapse of our great ally in Germany, the moderate group. It will then surrender to its fate and accept Hitler's work as a

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inevitable necessity, determined to liquidate the order of the state and society, which has proven to be degenerate and unviable. I warn you in all sincerity that the only way to avoid a general war is for you to immediately take active measures against Hitler, both economically and politically. The decisive condition for such a policy is to confront the Reich from all sides—to face up to it. Believe me, our friends, the moderates in Germany, are very much afraid that you will not take truly decisive action, or that it will then be too late... We have reached a very critical point for France and England. There is not a minute to lose. So far, you have only spoken, but you have not used strong measures. If you do not want to lose all support in Germany, if you really want to seize the last chance to avoid a general war, then you must use methods that involve the full commitment of Great Britain, including, in particular, the introduction of universal military service...." (FO 371/22968, C 4495.)

Roberts commented: "Now the moderates should take heart again, but I fear their views will not reach Hitler." Kirkpatrick commented: "We must not, of course, discourage the moderates, although they are few and relatively powerless. But we will gain no advantage from encouraging the moderates, because we will at the same time be feeding Hitler's anti-British propaganda, which will win over a very large part of public opinion." Cadogan comments: "That is the dilemma!" Vansittart emphasizes this report from the conspiracy circle with the words:

"It will be disastrous if we lose the German moderates. Compared to the situation in 1914, almost everything has changed to our disadvantage. Italy and Japan are on the wrong side instead of the right one, and by establishing Poland, we have prevented effective Russian support... Only two things can be counted among the positive points: 1. The improved situation in the United States, on which, however, we cannot immediately rely. 2. The fact that Germany will not go to war united as it did in 1914; in fact, the opposite is true."

Vansittart believes that Germany will split into two camps if the conspirators start a war. He complains about the early return of the British and French ambassadors to Berlin, because this "must disgust and discourage the moderate Germans." (Signed Vansittart, March 27, 1939. The document is signed by Sargent and Jebb.)

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London: Henderson's presence in Berlin "a national danger"

Shortly before, Ambassador Phipps in Paris also received a memorandum from a German "source that had so far proved completely reliable and was in close contact with Göring. The information had been confirmed by a person very close to the Vatican," Phipps wrote to Halifax. According to this information, it was "Hitler's personal wish, supported by Göring, Himmler, Ribbentrop, Goebbels, and Reichenau, to declare war on England before June or July. However, the army distrusted Hitler and would not fight against England and France if warned. This warning must be clear and definite. The only way to convince the army that we are serious is to withdraw the two ambassadors from Berlin with a very strong justification. There is no time to lose. The army does not agree with Hitler. Having

been wrong in its advice so far, it must now be convinced by something tangible and impressive. My informant believes that the withdrawal of the ambassadors would be seen by the Germans as a terrible thing that would open the eyes of many." At the end of his letter, Phipps asks for "the strictest secrecy regarding his communications. Should they become known, the people concerned in Germany would lose their lives." Phipps had promised "not to reveal" the name of his informant, saying only that he was a "great admirer of the Prime Minister's Munich policy." (FO 800/315, signed Eric Phipps, March 17, 1939. Phipps himself had "typed" this highly confidential letter. It is signed by Cadogan, Sargent, and Halifax.)

Phipps' German informant also took the opportunity to intrigue against the British ambassador in Berlin by insisting that "nothing the Germans said to Henderson should be believed." This was the influence of Vansittart, who hated Henderson because the ambassador was seeking peace with Germany and not war! The stories and rumors that Germany wanted to attack Switzerland, Holland, and even England in the spring of 1939 were fabrications of the conspirators, as is clearly evident from the English secret documents quoted above. No one knew this better than Vansittart, but he told Halifax that he had never read "such dangerous nonsense" as in Henderson's telegram.

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dated February 18, 1939. (DBFP IV, No. 118 and note on No. 197.) Henderson was convinced that one day the Memel and Danzig questions and those of the rest of Czechoslovakia would have to be resolved, "but Hitler wanted peace and would only use force if he was forced to do so.". Hitler reached a peaceful solution with Prague, which Hacha wanted because the Soviet sword of Damocles was hanging over him and England and France had proven to be unreliable allies. Vansittart compares Henderson with his special agent Conwell-Evans. The latter knew Ribbentrop at least "ten times better" than the ambassador, because Conwell-Evans had been "almost daily at the German Embassy" during Ribbentrop's time in London. But not with Ribbentrop, but with Erich Kordt, in order to discuss the conspirators' plans on higher orders. Vansittart enclosed a memorandum from Conwell-Evans with his letter to Halifax, which "must be read with the utmost attention not only by you, but also by your colleagues, on whose discretion you can rely." He underlined all the important passages in Conwell-Evans' report, which he placed on the same level as Colonel Christie and himself, whose opinions were in "complete contradiction" to those of Henderson. He recalled that on August 30, 1938, the ambassador had "informed the Cabinet that Hitler had not yet made up his mind and that we should therefore say or do nothing that might irritate him." The Cabinet agreed with the view of "the man on the spot," but not with ours. This might happen once, but certainly not twice, after the outcome is known. Well, the result was Munich, Chamberlain's great triumph! At the end of his tirade, Vansittart offered Halifax "to give him verbally, but not in writing, the exact sources that had informed him of the constantly changing plans that the German General Staff had received with regard to Eastern, Southeastern, and Western Europe. The naming of these names would remove any further doubt." Vansittart concluded his letter by stating that "Sir Nevile Henderson's presence in Berlin is a national danger! However, if he remains there, it is crucial a) that he receive a stern warning from here not to write such fantasies with which he is now showering us, and b) that the Cabinet at least have no illusions about their value, otherwise it will be misled in 1939 just as it was in 1938... The fact is that Sir Neville Henderson was never on the ball." (FO 371/23006, C 2762, signed R. V(ansittart), February 21, 1939.)

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Another agent: E. W. Tennant

Another useful agent for London was E. W. Tennant, who had many connections to German industry. On March 20, 1939, he wrote to R. Butler, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign Office, to offer advice "based on his knowledge of Germany" in the "current serious situation":

"If England stands firm now, even if it means war, there is a chance that a revolt will break out in Germany and Hitler will be overthrown. A large number of Germans hate Hitler, while they praise and admire Chamberlain. It is, however, of the utmost importance that nothing be done here to help Hitler rally his people behind him. Messrs. Eden, Duff Cooper, and Churchill must be prevented from writing articles or making speeches in which the Germans are insulted during the next few days or weeks.

If British ex-ministers attack Hitler or Germany, it is an absolute godsend for the Nazi government. Goebbels has made the remarks of these three men, whom the Germans regard as the most important leaders of British public opinion, headline news on the front pages of the newspapers ... Should a major war strike the already overworked and exhausted officials in Germany, a large number of them will physically collapse ... I am convinced of the sincere hope that the current regime in Germany will collapse if this country is confronted with a major war over the current dispute." (FO 371/23006, C 4012, March 20, 1939.)

The Foreign Office was literally inundated with reports of Germany's allegedly imminent attacks. On March 25, Sargent received a letter from a German named Ulrich stating that "war will break out in April or May." It was Hitler's

"to attack Romania first and then the Western democracies. Germany will have to try to win the war within six weeks, because its oil supplies will only last for that long."

"to attack Romania first and then the Western democracies. Germany will have to try to win the war within six weeks, because its oil will only last long enough to wage an intensive war, and the German nation will not be able to hold out for more than six weeks. Italy will probably leave the Axis when it believes that our—England's—military power is sufficient. Göring no longer has any influence, and Hitler only listens to Ribbentrop and Himmler." (FO 371/22967, C 42221, March 25, 1939. This file was read by Jebb and Roberts.)

At this point, it seems appropriate to point out the role and position of Himmler, since the Reichsführer SS repeatedly

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is portrayed as influential, even though he had virtually no say in foreign affairs.

Himmler was, of course, very powerful in domestic politics, and by virtue of his office, he could have uncovered the close contact between the German conspirators and the British government at any time. But Himmler discovered nothing, or at least reported nothing. It is incomprehensible that this was

possible given the countless reports the British received every day. His later behavior may offer a starting point from which his maneuvering between the political fronts can be deciphered. Circumstantial evidence suggests that the assassination attempt of July 20, 1944, "came as no surprise to Himmler and some of his subordinates, because they knew of the plans and deliberately did nothing to prevent them." (On Himmler's behavior regarding the overall complex of "July 20, 1944," see Hedwig Maier, "Die SS und der 20. Juli 1944" [The SS and July 20, 1944], Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte [Quarterly Journal for Contemporary History], 1966, pp. 299-316.)

Dr. Theodor Böttiger, who was working in London for the Völkischer Beobachter at the time, reported in mid-April 1939 on the mood in England:

"Chamberlain's position has been greatly weakened since the incorporation of Czechoslovakia into the Reich... The Albanian coup has only accelerated the process of weakening. Chamberlain himself has become weary inside. He is more of a tenacious businessman than a politician of unyielding hardness and determination... Basically, foreign policy and, even more so, anything military is alien to him. What is keeping him in power today, and will continue to do so for a long time to come, is the prestige he has enjoyed among the broad masses since September 1938. He is regarded as the man who 'preserves peace'. The relationship between the prime minister and the foreign minister has always been strange... For Chamberlain, who comes from the middle class, the strictly religious country gentleman from Yorkshire is almost a creature from another world, and he can never shake off his feeling of inferiority... If Chamberlain were to resign, there would be no other prime minister than Lord Halifax... The only serious opponent is Chancellor of the Exchequer Sir John Simon... But Simon is too intellectual and also unpopular because of his coldness... His rival is Sir Samuel Hoare, also a strict churchman, but unreliable as a human being... Hore-Belisha's position is precarious, and he is very unpopular in the War Office and among the officer corps... Whether Churchill will be accepted into the cabinet is still an open question... There is no question of hatred toward Germany among the English people... For the time being, the English are bluffing in the hope of gaining time." (Ribbentrop Office, Staff Reports, Volume I, signed Th. Böttiger, handwritten, April 26, 1939.)

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On March 26, 1939, Lipski rejects Germany's October proposals to Poland.

On March 17, 1939, the British government had spread the fabricated claim made by the Romanian ambassador in London, Tilea, through the press that Germany had issued an ultimatum to the Romanian government during the German-Romanian economic negotiations. The resulting panic in England was not calmed by the official denial of Romanian Foreign Minister Gafencu. This was not Chamberlain's intention, as even he was aware that Germany's mere economic foothold in southeastern Europe had already "made his blood boil" after the annexation of Austria. Now, after the Hitler-Hacha Pact, he obviously feared further peaceful agreements between the Reich and its eastern neighbors—it could only be about the Danzig question. He came to the conclusion that this was only possible either through an "ultimatum or through a preventive and precarious war"! (Feiling, p. 402.) But Chamberlain first had to secure the alibi of an apparent right and at the same time shift the blame for such a preventive war by England onto Germany. That is why Chamberlain's position was so precarious! On March 19, 1939, he personally drafted a declaration for the so-called collective security of Europe against Germany, which the French, Polish, and Soviet governments were invited to sign. The French agreed immediately, as did the Soviets, who, however, only wanted to join this new alliance,

propagandistically called the "peace front," once the "Quartet Pact" was finally established. Colonel Beck retained the option of rejecting such a treaty if the USSR joined it. He maintained this position until the end of August 1939, as he did not want to allow the armies of his hated enemy to march through his country, fearing, with good reason, that the Bolshevik troops would never withdraw from Poland.

After the establishment of the Protectorate in March, the Polish question had once again come to the fore. In a conversation on March 21, 1939, Ribbentrop finally felt compelled to point out to Lipski, who was stubbornly following instructions, that present-day Poland owed its "existence" to Germany after all. If the imperial government had pursued a different policy toward Russia in 1917, "there would be no Poland now"!

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Even for the Weimar Republic, under the Schleicher government, there was a chance to team up with the Soviet Union, and even then Poland would "hardly exist" today! Ribbentrop emphasized to Lipski that a German-Polish understanding had to be built that was based on the national forces of both countries. (ADAP VI, Doc. 61.)

During these days of intense diplomatic activity between London and Warsaw, Colonel Beck rejected a "Quartet Pact" that included the Soviet Union and demanded a British-Polish alliance instead. Chamberlain and Halifax hoped that such a British guarantee, contrary to all English traditions, would "enable Poland to break out of the German camp." (Liddell Hart: Memoirs, London 1965, p. 434.) The Foreign Office considered it a grave mistake that England had "allowed" Poland to come into being, because now Soviet Russia, without a direct border with Germany, could not effectively support Britain's policy of encirclement. The Polish barrier separated it from the Reich. Chamberlain now had to choose between an alliance with the Soviet Union and an alliance with Poland. He chose Poland, which, because of the Danzig question, had the advantage of providing a reason for war against Germany. Not only the conspirators, but also Roosevelt demanded that Chamberlain show a hard line to calm the "confused English public opinion," i.e., prevent a German-Polish agreement. Joseph Kennedy was repeatedly instructed by Roosevelt to "steel Chamberlain's backbone," even though he had repeatedly received the reply that this was pointless "as long as the British had no steel to fight with, and they didn't." (The Forrestal Diaries, London 1952, p. 129.)

The decisive American pressure came on March 24, 1939—two days before Poland's final rejection of Germany—when US Ambassador Bullitt asked the Polish ambassador in Paris, Lukasiewicz, whether "Warsaw would accept a joint alliance if England and France were to propose such a thing to Poland tomorrow." (Pol. Doc. 1, Doc. 11.) This resulted in the British guarantee for Poland, the decisive move to prevent Germany's guarantee for the entire Polish territory, including the corridor, which had been offered by Ribbentrop. As a result of this American intervention, Colonel Beck declared on the same day in an internal conference that he would reject the German proposals because it was very simple: "We will fight." He accepted the British

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treaty guarantee and referred to Danzig as "our territory," even though the Free City did not belong to the Polish state but was under the authority of the League of Nations. Nevertheless, Beck elevated Danzig, with its 96% German population, to a symbol of Poland. This was indeed a "precarious and sensitive issue," as Beck characterized his foreign policy. He, who was also known to be "sparing with the truth" toward the British (DBFP V, No. 268, note 3), continued to speak of a "one-sided proposal" by Germany, even though Germany's concession in exchange for Poland's agreement to the return of Danzig was very substantial, namely the guarantee that the former German territories in the corridor would be recognized as Polish territory, in addition to further generous trade concessions.

After Lukasiewicz heard from Bullitt on March 26, 1939, that the United States had means with which it could exert real "pressure on England" and would use them, Beck was certain of the British guarantee and also believed in the protection of the US. (Pol. Doc. 11.) He no longer needed to fear the Soviet Union as a guarantor. He now accepted the bilateral Anglo-Polish guarantee granted by Chamberlain on March 31, 1939, "without the slightest hesitation," so to speak "between two puffs on a cigarette," and demanded only that the Polish decision be kept secret. (DBFP IV, No. 573.) This suited the British just fine, as it allowed them to later claim that the British guarantee had only been given after the Polish "no," which Ribbentrop had already exposed as a forgery in Nuremberg. (J. v. Ribbentrop, op. cit., p. 162.) On the same day, March 26, Lipski was sent back from Warsaw to Berlin to hand Ribbentrop a memorandum from the Polish government, which, significantly, was not admitted in Nuremberg. In this memorandum, the German proposals of October 24, 1938, were finally rejected by Poland. Lipski told Ribbentrop that any further pursuit of the German proposals regarding the return of Danzig—which did not belong to Poland—would "mean war with Poland." (ADAP VI, Doc. 101 and J. v. Ribbentrop, op. cit., p. 162.)

Chamberlain put himself in a straitjacket with the Polish guarantee.

Based on reports from the German conspiracy circle, Chamberlain truly believed that he did not have to care about the feelings of the Germans.

But he was still unsure what to do. His dilemma was this: "If we don't act, there is a risk that Poland will one day be overrun. On the other hand, if we issue the warning that has now been proposed, we will have committed ourselves if Germany persists in its aggression." (David Dilks, ed., The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan, 1938-1945. London, 1971, p. 165; hereinafter cited as "Cadogan Diaries")

What had happened to cause Chamberlain to hastily make the guarantee to Poland before the British House of Commons on March 31, 1939?

During his stay in Germany in the spring of 1939, the conspirators had showered Colvin with alarming messages. Of particular importance to him was the information that "a German captain who was in contact with the War Ministry" had already told his friends at the beginning of March that "on March 28, the entire German army must be in full readiness, down to the last water bottle." (Colvin, Vansittart...., op. cit., p. 305.)

Colvin immediately flew to London on March 28 to inform Churchill of everything he had learned from his German conspirator friends and, through Churchill's mediation, also Chamberlain personally. He named Ewald von Kleist-Schmenzin, Herbert von Bismarck, General Ludwig Beck, and General von Witzleben as the main players in the planned coup against the Reich government, who had made

definitive offers to England for a coup d'état in Germany during the Czech crisis of 1938. (Colvin, Sunday Express, November 8, 1953.) Accompanied by Halifax and Cadogan, Colvin entered Downing Street at 6:10 p.m. on March 29, where Chamberlain was already waiting for them. When the prime minister urgently asked "what these Germans can offer us today," Colvin had no answer; he could only say that his friends had been prepared to overthrow Hitler the previous year. However, Colvin spontaneously answered Cadogan's question, "Would it influence these people in Germany if we gave Poland a guarantee?" with the words, "That would help." (Colvin, Vansittart..., op. cit., p. 309.) Halifax's private secretary Harvey, who was present at this significant conversation, recorded Colvin's statement in his diary that Hitler "would attack Poland in the very near future if we did not make it unmistakably clear that we would then attack him. There is a good chance that German generals would stop him or revolt against him." The

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the same generals, Colvin added, who had already stood ready with their rifles in September 1938 to stage a coup against Hitler. (Harvey Diaries, entry dated March 29, 1939.)

Chamberlain gave the Poles the guarantee in order to help the German conspirators, as Colvin had demanded. They would bring about Hitler's downfall and thereby achieve the decisive weakening of Germany without weakening England through a war. Colvin's "warnings" were the initial spark for Chamberlain's "idea of an immediate declaration" to strengthen Poland's position against Germany. (Cadogan Diaries, entry of March 29, 1939, p. 165.) Colvin's information was "not the origin of the guarantee to Poland, although it was a consequence of the talks of March 29 that its publication was accelerated." (David Dilks' commentary in the edition of the Cadogan Diaries, p. 165.) A guarantee for Poland had been discussed in the British Cabinet since March 22, but always only in connection with a guarantee for Romania. This guarantee had been systematically prepared by the infamous Tilea lie, which alleged that Germany had imposed an economic ultimatum on the Romanian government. (Cadogan Diaries, entry of March 18, 1939.) In the event of a probable Polish rejection of a unilateral guarantee, London and Paris had considered offering Warsaw "a guarantee of a mutual Polish-Romanian guarantee pact." (Cadogan Diaries, entry of March 22, 1939, p. 162.) On March 26, Cadogan discussed with Halifax "our contacts with the Polish and Romanian governments regarding our guarantee. P.M. agreed in principle." The following day, the undersecretary noted in his diary that "to my surprise, the Foreign Policy Committee raised no serious objections—not even John Simon—to our guarantee for Poland and Romania..." (Cadogan Diaries, entries of March 26 and 27, 1939.) Cadogan called the guarantee to Poland a "terrible gamble." (Cadogan Diaries, entry of March 31, 1939.)

Twenty-five years later, the former undersecretary admitted the criminal recklessness with which Chamberlain had set the course that led Europe to the brink of disaster in September 1939. Looking back, he once again viewed the critical days of March through his historical telescope:

"Hitler pursued his goals 'one by one'. And that was what finally drove Chamberlain to make a sudden and surprising

A decision had to be made, namely to guarantee Poland: Of course, our guarantee could not offer

Poland any kind of protection in the event of an imminent attack. But it did give him – Chamberlain – a roadmap. He had committed himself, and in the event of a German attack on Poland, he would be spared agonizing doubts and indecision. One could say that this was cruel to the Poles. I do not entirely agree with that, because they must have been aware of our military situation and because they should have been aware of the imminent danger. One could say that it was cynical. Perhaps it was, but it brought us into the war... And in the end, we and our allies won it. Of course, one cannot expect the poor Poles to appreciate such a result themselves." (Cadogan to Ian Colvin, January 20, 1964, Cadogan Diaries, p. 167. Emphasis in the original.)

In March 1939, Chamberlain had imposed obligations on himself that he neither wanted nor was able to fulfill. The Poles, who were forced into war and are still not free today, are being kicked in the teeth after the fact because they were foolish enough to accept the guarantee despite England's obviously catastrophic military and political situation. Although Chamberlain was neither militarily nor politically trained, he believed he had a trump card in his hand: the German conspirators would eliminate Hitler in a coup before his "splendid little war" could escalate into a destructive world conflict! Chamberlain's guarantee to Poland served a dual purpose: to keep the Poles in check and to encourage the German conspirators, because the ultimate goal of his policy was to "bring about a revolution in Germany." (Lukasiewicz to Bullitt, 1938, in Pol. Dok. z. Vorgeschichte des Krieges [Polish Documents on the Prehistory of the War].)

Germany's eastern neighbor was just a pawn on the chessboard on which Chamberlain wanted to checkmate his opponent Hitler. Poland, he confessed to his cabinet colleagues on March 27, was "vital to his plan, because Germany's weak point was its current inability to wage a war on two fronts, and if Poland did not join in, Germany would escape this uncertainty." (Cabinet documents of the Foreign Policy Committee, March 27, 1939, Cab. 27. 624, p. 202.) During these critical days, a military study by the British Chiefs of Staff was also making the rounds, which Lord Chatfield, Minister for Coordination of Defense, circulated in the cabinet. In the event of a German-Polish war, it stated bluntly, Poland would be overrun by German troops within two to three months. But with the conquest of Poland, the German Wehrmacht would be able to

suffered heavy losses in terms of human life and material. The British chiefs of staff pressed most emphatically for a mutual guarantee agreement with Warsaw in order to force Germany into a two-front war, which was the only way to make the blockade against the Reich effective.

England's solid front

Admiral Canaris: Blitz attack on the English fleet

On April 3, Chamberlain gathered his closest associates in his room in the House of Commons: Halifax, Vansittart, Sargent, Malkin, Strang, Makins, John Simon, Butler, and Sir Horace Wilson. The topic was: How should the Polish foreign minister be treated with regard to the guarantee? Colonel Beck finally accepted the mutual Polish-English guarantee in London on April 4, but wanted nothing to do with a Polish guarantee for Romania. It also remained unclear whether he would join England in the event of a German attack on "Holland, Belgium, Switzerland, etc."; on the other hand, he had to come to the aid of England if it was attacked. (Cadogan Diaries, p. 168f.)

On April 3 and 8, Ogilvie-Forbes reported sensational news from his German "informant, who was in contact with the German War Ministry": England must expect a "blitz attack without ultimatum or declaration of war on the British fleet." The entire German army had been ordered to be "ready to march." On April 14, he telegraphed again that the Reich government was considering "securing the return of Danzig by Hitler's birthday on April 20." Ogilvie-Forbes added: "Certain military circles in Germany are said to be of the opinion that Hitler's government will collapse if he provokes a world war over Danzig." (DBFP IV, No. 31, No. 163 and No. 606.) Cadogan also mentions the rumors of an alleged German plan for a lightning attack on the British fleet, which had been "put out into the world by Admiral Canaris." The cabinet, however, took this fabrication seriously and had already given instructions to the British air defense before the deception was uncovered. (Cadogan, Diaries, p. 169, and Oliver Harvey, Diaries, April 5, 1939.) Vansittart had also been "successfully persuaded by another German agent that German submarines were patrolling the Channel and the Thames Estuary."

There was not a word of truth in all the rumors of an alleged surprise attack on Danzig and Poland. They were just as fabricated as the rumors of German troop concentrations on May 21.

1938, which had led to the first Czech crisis. Hitler had not ordered any military measures in March 1939, but had been waiting for Colonel Beck's response to the January talks. However, the Polish foreign minister did not come to Berlin, but concluded the guarantee agreement with London verbally from Warsaw on March 26. On April 1, in his speech in Wilhelmshaven, Hitler pointed to the possible termination of the German-British naval agreement of 1935 because England obviously no longer wished to "ever again go to war against Germany." However, this desire was the basis of the German-British naval agreement and had been expressly reiterated by Chamberlain in his statement of September 30, 1938.

From Yugoslavia, British envoy Sir R. Campbell reported that a dismissed Austrian legation secretary had informed him "that the Germans were making very intensive economic preparations along the line of Romania, Bulgaria, and Turkey with the aim of securing the minerals in Asia Minor." The envoy, who himself did not believe the report to be authentic, requested that "the source be kept strictly secret, because even without naming names, the informant could easily be identified." (FO 371/22968, C 4742.) Another Austrian, Dr. Tugendhat, visited Parliamentary Under-Secretary Butler and, as a consequence of Chamberlain's guarantee, demanded that "Hitler would never forgive England" either immediate war or even stronger propaganda in Germany "to separate the regime from the people before the time was ripe for real war." He offered his services to the BBC and believed that "Poland would not prove to be a very good ally." (FO 371/22968, C 4841, signed R. Butler, April 4, 1939.) The Kordt brothers also reappeared and had Dr. Abshagen spread rumors about Hitler and Ribbentrop in London. The foreign minister was no longer as highly regarded as before because he "wanted to risk war, while Hitler hoped to achieve everything without involving his country in military action." This talk was followed by the old untruth that Ribbentrop had not foreseen England's firm stance. Abshagen was "enthusiastic" that Great Britain had finally proved unyielding. (FO 371/22969, C 5062, signed W. Ridsdale, April 5, 1939.) Cadogan writes: "I regret to say that I do not trust either of the Kordts." (Cadogan Diaries, May 5, 1939, p. 178.)

Abshagen spoke on behalf of the conspirators, who had gathered in Cham-

were very satisfied with Berlin's guarantee to Poland and endeavored to obtain further support for their coup plans from abroad. Chief of Staff Halder personally approached the American chargé d'affaires in Berlin, Mr. Geist, to inform him that "the German army feared the idea of a European war but would certainly march if Hitler ordered it. There was no alternative.Geist replied "in no uncertain terms that his country would not hesitate to use all means at its disposal to fight Germany in the event of war, unless there was a complete change in German policy." (FO 371/22969, C 5145, April 13, 1939.)

Halder had to be satisfied with the statement by the American chargé d'affaires Geist that the US would in any case fight the current German government and that "it could take years before an American ambassador returned to Berlin." Today it is generally known that the former German Chief of the General Staff was denazified on the following grounds: "Halder's conduct in 1938 was in any case high treason and treason against the state." (Dr. Martin Horn, "Halder - Schuld oder Tragik?" [Halder - Guilt or Tragedy?], Munich 1948, p. 37.) In 1939 it was no different.

As the British remained keen to gauge the mood in Germany, Lieutenant Colonel Sir Arnold Wilson made a private Easter visit to Berlin. He wanted to speak to the party's leading men but only managed to reach Walter Hewel, Ribbentrop's liaison officer to Hitler. Hitler had made "moderate" proposals to the Poles, Hewel explained, and that was why "the Prime Minister's statement in Parliament on March 31 about the guarantee to Poland had hit him like a bomb." In the German view, the guarantee had intensified Polish resistance, and Wilson was convinced that "the Danzig and Corridor question alone was a poor pretext for forcing Germany into a European war." In Hewel's view, the so-called "Hitler Doctrine" for Southeastern Europe was a counterpart to the Monroe Doctrine in South and Central America and the alleged British parallel in Africa. Finally, Ogilvie-Forbes, the author of this Wilson report, gives Lord Halifax urgent advice not to continue to differentiate between Hitler and the German people. As successful as this had been in the past, it would be extremely dangerous for the future and only feasible "once Hitler has been overthrown." (FO 371/22969, C 5248, April 4, 1939, signed Ogilvie-Forbes.) From Sir Arnold Wilson's previous private

In a letter to Ogilvie-Forbes, several points are worth mentioning: Hewel had told him that Hitler "wanted nothing more than an agreement with England and a subsequent close friendship." In response to an interjection from a minister present that "England would only concede something to another country under pressure, and that a democratic government could not give anything away without suffering a dangerous loss of prestige," Hewel replied: "We have the same difficulties, albeit not as great—just think of our renunciation of Tyrol—an extremely unpopular move!" Hewel was astonished at the moderation of the German proposals to Poland with regard to Danzig and the corridor and said to Hitler after reading them: "I hope that the Poles will reject them, and if they do, I hope that you will not repeat the offer." This sentence is important for deciphering postwar literature. It is precisely this statement that is repeatedly attributed to Hitler himself as proof that he did not mean his moderate proposals seriously. Hewel believed that the German proposals to Poland regarding Danzig and the corridor should be made public because their "moderation would impress." He did not believe in an advance into Romania; the economic initiative in that country was the "direct consequence of the American decision to hinder, if not stop, German exports to Romania." Hitler's statement that "Germany must export or die" must be taken literally, because Germany wants to live. Hewel also stated that it was "irritating and pointless" that Chamberlain and other cabinet members repeatedly

made a distinction between "the Führer and the German people." Hitler had never been shown such blind trust as he was today, by the people, the army, and the party, and he himself had never been so confident. Hewel showed a London Sunday newspaper from April 2, 1939, with the headline "Hitler is getting scared" and excerpts from the Wilhelmshaven speech. Roberts commented on this report that Wilson could not have spoken very convincingly for England "because he himself is half a Nazi"! Kirkpatrick also comments somewhat excitedly in his handwritten notes on the alleged "Hitler doctrine" in Central Europe as a parallel to the Monroe Doctrine. (FO 371/22969, C 5248, April 11, 1939. The Wilson document is also signed by Strang, Cadogan, and Halifax.)

On April 29, 1939, Brigadier General Beaumont-Nesbitt wrote

from the British War Office sent an extremely important "personal and confidential" letter to Strang. His considerations were as follows:

"Of course, Germany's strategic position on its eastern border has been greatly strengthened. Poland can now be attacked from both the south and the west. Romania is now within firing range of Hungary. Yugoslavia can be threatened by Hungary and the Ostmark... The question raised by Mason-MacFarlane as to whether Germany is prepared to wage a war on two fronts, now or later, is of course of crucial importance to its enemies.... Germany may hesitate to take such a course, but one should not rush to conclude that it cannot win such a war under any circumstances... The effectiveness of a blockade—which, as is well known, would only be successful in a two-front war—is doubted by the Food Department... Germany's food situation has improved and would be sufficient for at least a year.

Regarding the assertion that there are serious elements of discontent within Germany, with which we are in complete agreement, we believe that time is on the side of Germany's opponents in this matter. We also agree that war is probably necessary to transform this discontent into organized resistance. But not a preventive war, because that would certainly banish all the discontented and rally the German people behind their leaders. One need only think of the encirclement policy, which has already caused so much harm..." (FO 371/22956, C 6447, April 29, 1939, signed Beaumont-Nesbitt to Strang.)

Roberts commented on this report in writing that neither the War Ministry nor he himself agreed with Mason-MacFarlane's proposal to start a war against Germany in the near future. I have drawn up a plan for dealing with the discontented elements in Germany." Kirkpatrick commented on this letter in the same vein: "The proposal for a preventive war was never practicable. We missed that bus three years ago." Strang writes by hand: "Brigadier Beaumont-Nesbitt should be thanked for his interesting letter."

Henderson's accusations against the British press

At the end of April, Henderson complained to Cadogan in a private letter about the machinations of the English newspapers. Diplomacy was impossible, he said, as long as the British press did everything "to undermine us."

ambassador and sabotage our actions." He had requested a visit by Weizsäcker to Ribbentrop, but received the reply that the minister was too busy with the Yugoslav visit. Henderson, however, believed that he would have been received by Ribbentrop despite Markovich if the British press had not

made such "irresponsible statements about warnings and ultimatums." Henderson demanded "proper guidance" for the British press, even though he knew that, unlike in Germany, the English newspapers received their instructions on foreign affairs from the news department of the Foreign Office. So if they sabotaged, they did so on behalf of the British Foreign Minister. (FO 800/294, signed Nevile Henderson, April 27, 1939.) With his criticism of the press, Henderson wanted to warn his government that, in view of the "very serious danger posed by the Polish crisis," it was crucial that the British newspapers "not repeat the disastrous impression of last May 21." They claimed that Germany had been "forced to back down by threats from outside." He was desperate that this was still being repeated over and over again in England and Poland. He pointed out to Halifax that only those who themselves wanted war would accuse their opponents of alleged cowardice. Many a war had been forced in this way, for there was only a "certain amount of humiliation that a nation could endure." (DBFP V, No. 281.)

As a consequence of the Anglo-Polish guarantee treaty, which was directed exclusively against Germany, Hitler announced on April 28, 1939, that Poland had unilaterally violated the German-Polish non-aggression pact, which was therefore no longer valid. In his speech, however, he added, addressing Warsaw, that this did not mean any change in his fundamental attitude toward Poland. "Should the Polish government wish to enter into new contractual relations with Germany, he would welcome this, provided, however, that such an arrangement was based on a clear and mutually binding commitment." (DdP Vol. V, p. 47ff.) Hitler had expressed the same wish the day before, on April 27, to the British government when terminating the naval agreement of June 18, 1935, stating that "the qualitative provisions of the German-English agreement of July 17, 1937, remain unaffected." (DdP Vol. V, p. 55.)

After Lipski, on March 24, as a result of the British guarantee offer to Poland, rejected the German proposals of October 24

had finally rejected this, Ribbentrop recommended to Hitler on March 26, 1939, that he wait for the dismantling of Polish military measures. However, if this did not happen, he would himself remind Lipski that such an arrangement "would end badly." (ADAP VL Doc. 101.)

Henderson was also convinced that Poland was putting itself in great danger by rejecting the "moderate" German proposals, and called the extraterritorial roads through the corridor, which were to benefit both the German and Polish sides, "a completely fair arrangement." He demanded that his government force Poland to "reconcile" with Germany instead of prohibiting it, and warned against the British "catastrophic policy, which has neither moral nor practical justification." Henderson described the introduction of conscription in England demanded by Roosevelt and Colonel Beck as a "challenge to Germany" because such a measure had never before been ordered in peacetime, and refused to inform Ribbentrop personally of the British decision to announce it. Henderson took "constructive proposals" from Hitler's Reichstag speech on April 28 regarding Germany's willingness to negotiate.

"a) To conclude a new German-English naval agreement.

b) Negotiate a new German-Polish regulation and

c) to give certain states guarantees against aggression under certain conditions." (DBFP V, No. 314.)

The ambassador described the German proposals to Poland of October 24, 1938, in contrast to the British policy of catastrophe, as "moral and just," with which even a "neutral Martian would agree as an arbitrator." (DBFP V, No. 364.) In addition, all diplomats in Berlin, just like himself, considered "the German offer to be surprisingly favorable."

Ribbentrop must be eliminated

Ribbentrop was aware that Colonel Beck had not informed the British of Germany's offer to Poland during his stay in London on April 4, 1939. When Chamberlain asked, for example, "whether Germany had ever demanded a motorway," Beck replied evasively and added, despite the fact that German-Polish negotiations had been going on for over half a year:

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"Nothing has happened that has gone beyond the stage of discussions... If the Polish government is taking a firm stance on Danzig and, in particular, will not tolerate a fait accompli, then this is not because of Danzig itself. Danzig has become a kind of symbol!" (DBFP V, No. 2.)

The fact that Beck was able to describe the Free City, which did not belong to Poland and whose population was 96% German, as the "symbol" of the Polish state without Chamberlain objecting is perhaps one of the most serious British offenses in forcing the outbreak of war.

Henderson, following instructions, was dishonest toward Ribbentrop, who was aware of Beck's insincere attitude in London, and declared that he did not know whether Beck had informed the British government of the German offer. Once again, it became clear that Ribbentrop was not to be taken in by guesswork, but had correctly assessed the situation in the spring of 1939. Henderson therefore suggested to Under-Secretary Cadogan on May 8 that the German foreign minister be sidelined even more than before and that efforts be concentrated as far as possible on talks with Weizsäcker and his like-minded colleagues. Henderson's reports and suggestions on this matter are reproduced below:

"1. It may become necessary at any moment to make a sharp representation to the German government and even to issue a definitive warning.

2. The difficulty with Ribbentrop is as follows:

a) He seems neither to want to understand what is said nor to listen at all. Recently, Dirksen said to me mildly: 'The Reich Minister is a poor listener.'

b) Even if he listens or understands, one cannot be sure that what one says will be passed on to Hitler, unless it is likely to please him and >

c) even if it is passed on, one cannot be sure that it will not be completely misinterpreted or falsified.

3. If I had to make a verbal communication, I would find it much more useful—quite apart from personal considerations—to make it to Weizsäcker rather than Ribbentrop. The former keeps records of what is said, and these probably form the basis for a written report, which at least has a chance of being passed on to the Führer in this form.

4. On the other hand, if it were something really unpleasant, I would prefer to make the necessary

representations to Ribbentrop, but, if possible, in writing as an aide-m&moire or, if necessary, as a direct note or memorandum. Otherwise, there could be misunderstandings. It might even be a good idea to consider whether – if and

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when the moment has come or should come – the démarche should not take the form of a letter or be accompanied by a letter from the Prime Minister to Hitler himself, which I would either hand over to Ribbentrop or ask the latter to allow me to hand over to Hitler myself.

5. If it is humanly possible to avoid it, the public must of course remain unaware of the fact that such demarches are being made until they have actually been made.

6. For obvious reasons, I prefer to make these proposals now rather than wait until the time comes.

I consider it very uncertain today whether Hitler will receive me at any time. It is no longer as it was last year. He may possibly want to snub His Majesty's government through me. This possibility must also be considered." (DBFP V, No. 420.)

Since it would have been pointless to continue deceiving Ribbentrop, Henderson concentrated solely on talks with Weizsäcker in the future. He did not need to deceive Weizsäcker, but could discuss Britain's intentions toward Germany quite openly with him. Ambassador von Dirksen in London also belonged to the German State Secretary's circle, as he was known to have been informed of the coup plans since at least 1938 due to his "ambiguous orientation." Because Ribbentrop was an exceptionally attentive listener who did not miss any nuances, and because he had reported back to London in detail with his own comments, he was enemy No. 1 for the British. They knew that he saw through them, and that is why they "hated" him, as Burckhardt has Gauleiter Forster explain in the summer of 1939. Ribbentrop, for his part, remembered very well everything to which he had never received an answer from the English. For example, his question in 1938 whether it was "the real policy of the British government, no matter what provocations the Czechs engaged in, to march against Germany," and that Chamberlain had never denied the Prague Manifesto of September 25, 1938, according to which the Czech mobilization during the Godesberg negotiations had been carried out "with the knowledge, advice, and consent of the British and French governments." (Files II, Doc. 600.)

It seems grotesque to portray Weizsäcker as a supposedly reliable bearer of unpleasant news to Hitler. He probably prompted Henderson's aforementioned propaganda letter to Cadogan, because Weizsäcker later stated, as is well known:

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"I would have been satisfied if nothing else had come out of the talks with the enemy other than the assurance that foreign countries would not negotiate with Mr. Ribbentrop." Kosthorst also notes the following about the war period: "Neither the reporting from neutral countries directed by von Weizsäcker nor his efforts to obtain at least an open rejection of Ribbentrop from the Allies could succeed given the situation!" In October 1939, German informants were still discussing with their British friends what to do next. They came to the conclusion that "the first step must be to discredit Ribbentrop." (Envoy Harrison to Hull, Bern, October 3, 1939, No. 130, p. 520, FRUS 1939, I, Foreign Relations United States.) The "explicit reporting" requested by von Weizsäcker was intended to provide him with material that would make it easier for the generals to decide to revolt. (Kosthorst, p.

18£f.)

Halifax's great deception

On May 2, 1939, Henderson reported to Halifax: "It is indeed Ribbentrop's unmistakeable view that England is seeking war with Germany because it cannot bring itself to recognize Germany as a great power." (DBFPV, No. 330, para. 4.) Halifax responded to this with a deception and telegraphed Henderson on May 9:

"1. It is clear from your reports that Mr. von Ribbentrop and others who think like him still believe that His Majesty's Government is not prepared to fulfill its guarantee to Poland, or that it in any case regards the Danzig question as not falling within the scope of the guarantee.

2. I am not familiar with the views of the Army High Command, but it seems useful to me, if you have no objection, to speak occasionally with General Keitel, the Commander-in-Chief, and/or the Chief of the General Staff along the following lines:

3. We would, of course, welcome a just settlement with pleasure. But the Poles could never agree to the procedure of unilateral action or an ultimatum. Should the German government demand the unconditional return of Danzig, we are convinced that the Poles would regard their independence as threatened and that any use of force by Germany would be met with force by Poland. And if such action by Germany leads to the outbreak of hostilities between Germany and Poland, there is no doubt that both we

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as well as the French will intervene and many other states are likely to join us. The German government can face such a possibility with equanimity. But whatever damage it might inflict on the Western powers, we believe that the latter will certainly triumph. In other words, if Mr. Hitler provokes a war over Danzig, it will not only mean the destruction of the Nazi regime, but very likely also the final collapse of the Greater German Reich. Passed on to Rome." (DBFP V, No. 431.)

This instruction goes far beyond the usual English cant, because Halifax is saying exactly the opposite of what Henderson had just told him about Ribbentrop's view.

This instruction goes far beyond the usual English cant, for Halifax is repeating exactly the opposite of what Henderson had just told him about Ribbentrop's view. The official document is a forgery. And the lie that Ribbentrop did not believe in England's determination to fight for Danzig was to be spread by the German conspiracy circle, as can be seen from point 2. Halifax was able to rely on similar assertions made by Weizsäcker, who two weeks earlier, on April 15, had informed Mackensen's ambassador in Rome in a letter written in his own hand—he did not dare to dictate such untruths—that "that in Mr. von Ribbentrop's view, no English soldier would be mobilized in the event of a German-Polish conflict." (ADAP VI, Doc. 209.)

The Halifax lie had an even deeper meaning and served a dual purpose: The telegram was intended to discredit Ribbentrop, because in May 1939 there was a British motive to undermine, if not destroy, Ribbentrop's reputation and position. The foreign minister had just successfully concluded the first

phase of the Steel Pact negotiations with Ciano in Milan. That is why the Halifax deception was also passed on to Rome. For London, the possibility of a counter-coalition was looming, which, under Japanese influence, could become dangerous for the British Empire in the event of a crisis.

Henderson's task was now to ensure that British harshness toward Hitler's alleged plans for aggression was disseminated as widely as possible. But he was disturbed by the second point in Halifax's instructions, which referred to Keitel, Brauchitsch, and Halder. In order to carry out his instructions more safely, he asked Cadogan for a new telegram omitting point 2. This telegram was to repeat the content of the directive, but "as if by mistake in a secret code that the Germans could not decipher."

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could decode it"! Henderson resorted to this excuse in order not to reveal himself as an active propagandist and to avoid the danger of being declared persona non grata. He promised Cado- gan to "repeat the contents of the expected code telegram in useful circles" and also to instruct the military attaché "to do the same in all conversations he had with German officers." He himself wanted to talk to "Keitel & Co." in a similar manner. (DBFP V, No. 589 note) Of course, he then spoke only with Halder, because he understood that Keitel's name had been misused to cover the tracks of the conspirators.

In fact, on the following day, May 11, Henderson received the code telegram requested by the Foreign Office, with the paragraph concerning the German generals omitted. (DBFP V, No. 489.) Henderson now hastened to make the contents of the code telegram known to his German friends and, above all, to the "General Staff." Ribbentrop was not to find out about this. But on May 14, Mussolini sent "with the utmost urgency for the Reich Foreign Minister personally, strictly confidential" a copy of the Halifax code telegram of May 11, which had been deciphered by the Italian secret service. (ADAP VI, Doc. 377.) However, since Henderson had taken the precaution of omitting paragraph 2 of the original telegram, Ribbentrop did not know that the ambassador had been instructed to discuss the already ventilated English declaration of war alone with Chief of the General Staff Halder.

The following day, May 15, Henderson again reported on Ribbentrop's firm conviction that England "intended to attack Germany in any case." He therefore recommended to his government that it would be better "if this event occurred now rather than at a later date, when Germany might be even more powerful than it is today." (DBFP V, p. 804f.) Both of Henderson's telegrams of May 2 and 15 clearly show that Kordt's theory that Ribbentrop believed England was decadent and would not fight was not true.

The military attaché Mason-MacFarlane spoke with German officers he considered appropriate, saying that "Danzig itself is only a temporary flashpoint, because for us Englishmen the issue at stake is much greater than Danzig alone." Since the bigger issue for England than Danzig was the promised overthrow of Germany, Mason-MacFarlane finally asked his German counterpart

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His German counterpart, Colonel Count von Schwerin, responded somewhat impatiently but openly, asking "whether the War Ministry had finally understood the situation in Berlin." (DBFP V, p. 806.) Henderson also discussed with Weizsäcker the deceptive Halifax language regulation and then reported to London that, in the opinion of the State Secretary, "in Germany, the British guarantee for Poland is not taken very seriously," which was intended to feign that Hitler and Ribbentrop did not believe in

England's determination to fight. (DBFP V, No. 525.)

For Chamberlain himself, the fate of Danzig meant as little as the fate of a conflict to overthrow Hitler with the help of the conspirators. That is why Henderson had to hold talks with Halder and a "number of other generals" in accordance with the Halifax code telegram. Halder himself confirms that he had lunch with Henderson and "that, contrary to all social conventions, Henderson and I spoke only to each other at the table and afterwards, and that the exchange of ideas left nothing to be desired. Immediately after this lunch, I drove to my friend von Weizsäcker and asked him to now also exert his influence on Henderson so that England would unequivocally emphasize to Hitler its determination to act." (Letter from Halder to Dr. Krausnick dated April 26, 1955, quoted from Rudi Strauch, "Henderson," p. 222.) Halder made his feelings very clear to Henderson during this meal when he said that Hitler had to be "hit with an axe on the hand"! He then explained to Weizsäcker: "As Chief of the General Staff, he himself could not very well tell the English that England should let its Home Fleet sail and that France should mobilize." (Krausnick, Die Vollmacht des Gewissens, Bonn 1956, Doc. 374.) Halder also informed Brauchitsch. (Rudi Strauch, p. 222.)

In the meantime, Henderson had also met with Göring and reported back to London: "The Field Marshal complained about British hostility in general, about the political and economic encirclement of Germany, and about the activities of the English war party, etc. ... Göring asked me whether England was really determined to go to war out of envy of a strong Germany, and if so, what could be done to avoid it." Finally, Göring declared: "Nothing will prevent the Germans from taking immediate action if the Poles attempt to take possession of Danzig." (DBFP V, No. 658/59.) Chamberlain had considered this possibility.

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Already considered on March 30 and rejected only because Poland, not Germany, would then have been the aggressor, which would have meant that the conspirators might not have decided to take action against Hitler. (DBFP VI, No. 468 and 473.) Henderson had, as instructed, discussed the contents of the Halifax Code Telegram with all Germans whom he considered suitable. But he distanced himself from the "Foreign Office Memorandum on the Danzig Question" of May 5, 1939, and wrote in a private letter to Strang on May 12:

"As unpleasant as it may be to hear, the paragraph 'The present situation' does not appear to me to be an absolutely impartial statement on the problem between Poland and Germany. The Polish side is considered in detail, while the German side is dismissed somewhat summarily, on the basis of assumptions about its most far-reaching goals... The German side has its own values, and I would have considered it fairer to record these, especially since the memorandum was written for the Cabinet.

Danzig is a purely German city, and it is a fact ... that even the most peace-loving Germans wish to return to the Reich ... If Berlin had a Place de la Concorde, the Danzig monument would be draped in black mourning cloth, just as the Strasbourg statue has been for 50 years. The same applies to the corridor. It would be provocative for any nation to be cut off from part of its possessions, from a territory that belongs to some foreign nation... Danzig is in fact already a microcosm of the Reich. In any case, it is not Polish, and its incorporation into the Reich as a free city, as Hitler has proposed, would make little difference... It seems to me better to settle the Danzig question alone and not together with the corridor. The corridor is Polish, but Danzig is not, and it would be much easier for Germany to portray itself as the victim of Polish or Western aggression in a conflict over Danzig. That is what I fear most. If it must be so, then our goal should be a war in which Germany's aggressiveness would be

obvious to the whole world, including the Germans themselves." (DBFP V, p. 817£.)

Henderson still defended the German cause as just, but through the Halifax Code instruction and the Foreign Office memorandum, he realized that Chamberlain was steering toward war. He himself was worn down and could only advise that in such a war, Germany must appear guilty before the whole world. He wrote to Cadogan in a personal, handwritten letter in which he stated with resignation:

"The only useful thing we can do now is to quickly train our young men for war. We should at least be able to defend ourselves and trust that we will win the war in the end—even if the Poles are badly beaten at first. I believe that in bridge, this is called 'flag-wagging.' I feel sorry for you. I hate my own life enough. But yours is in some ways infinitely worse, even if it is more pleasant because you live among your own countrymen..." (FO 800/294, May 10, 1939, Henderson to Cadogan.)

The British ambassador had been against the introduction of conscription in peacetime because, together with the British guarantee to Poland, it made war almost inevitable. Now he had resigned himself to it, even though he knew that Poland would be the defenseless victim of Chamberlain's policy. Chamberlain, too, had hesitated to introduce universal conscription before the war. But he was pressured from all sides to order conscription. In April, he had received an impassioned letter from Daladier via Ambassador Phipps asking him to "announce conscription in Great Britain before Hitler's speech on April 28." This was important, Phipps added, because "it was already being said that England was prepared to fight for the freedoms of Europe until the death of the last Frenchman." (Bullitt to Hull. Paris, April 10, 1939. No. 785. For the President personally Frus 1939, I, pp. 169/70.) On April 21, Ambassador Kennedy telegraphed from London: "During my absence, Sir Alexander Cadogan summoned Chargé d'Affaires Johnson to convey to him the following strictly confidential information, which, at the request of the Prime Minister, was also to be communicated to the President: On Wednesday, April 26, the Prime Minister will announce, under the guise of 'emergency measures,' military measures of the first order, including conscription... The decision to do so will undoubtedly have unfavorable consequences in Germany..." (Kennedy to Hull, London, April 21, 1939, No. 538, Frus 1939, I, pp. 72. Personal for the Secretary of State and Under-Secretary of State.) On the same day, Bullitt also telegraphed Washington that Vansittart had told him he was in favor of "immediate conscription." Bullitt added that "Vansittart's relationship with Halifax had now become very close, but his relations with Chamberlain were more reserved than ever." (Frus 1939, I, Bullitt to Hull, Paris, April 21, 1939, No. 798, p. 240.)

Henderson's willingness to reach an understanding was increasingly a thorn in the side of his opponents. His proposal to cooperate with Germany on an economic level (DBFP V, No. 659,

Henderson to Halifax, May 28, 1939), met with strong rejection from Ashton-Gwatkin:

"Sir Nevile Henderson asks whether British policy should a) let the Germans stew in their own juice or b) be prepared to help them out of their economic difficulties. After 'careful consideration,' he considers the latter to be the better course, despite the obvious 'dangers.' How should we help Germany? 1. Through loans or credits? 2. By suspending reparations? 3. By reducing tariffs to the detriment of our own industries? 4. By returning colonies? 5. By making administrative concessions to Germans in British colonies? 6. By withdrawing completely from trade with the Balkans, leaving the whole field to

the Germans?.... Let us stop talking about the nonsense of economic aid." (FO 800/315, June 1, 1939, signed Gwatkin.)

Ashton-Gwatkin was really talking nonsense, because the first three points were not urgent and Hitler had postponed the colonial question for years. So only the trade issues with the Balkans remained. (FO 800/315, June 1, 1939, signed Gwatkin.)

Henderson knew very well that his voice carried little weight in England and that he had powerful enemies in the Foreign Office.

Henderson knew full well that his voice carried little weight in England and that he had powerful enemies in the Foreign Office. On the same day that Ashton-Gwatkin criticized him so sharply, he wrote an official letter to Halifax in which he described the German-Polish situation: Whether a German-Polish compromise was still possible depended on "how long Hitler was still prepared to wait... If the German press is an honest barometer, it certainly indicates that Hitler still desires and hopes for a peaceful settlement." (DBFP V, No. 713.) At the same time, he wrote a personal letter to Cadogan in which he stated the following about the Reich government:

"I have the impression that those in charge increasingly believe that we will go to war in any case once we are ready. From Hitler's speech in Kassel on Sunday, I gather a warning to his people to prepare for a new 1914/18 'because England still insists on its policy of Delenda est Germania'. Perhaps he is only saying this to maintain the warlike mood for all eventualities. Despite his war organization, which has been built up at great expense, I believe that Hitler himself, unlike some of those around him, wants peace and will not recklessly risk a world war...

Neurath told Attolico that Hitler fully realizes that unilateral German action with regard to Danzig would immediately bring the British onto the scene. I heard today from my Vatican colleague that the road between the Polish border and Frankfurt an der Oder is clogged with German refugees from Poland... . Nevertheless, the Berliners are bringing

Newspapers are not reporting this fact, and that seems to me to be proof that Hitler is not seeking a conflict that could lead to a world war. Burckhardt told Attolico that he attributes three-quarters of the blame for the deterioration of German-Polish relations to the Poles.... If you believe that I am pro-German or anti-Polish, I cannot change that. I only want to find a solution that is both fair and reasonable and will last for a long time. I am all for taking a strong line now that we have the power behind our words. But saying 'no' to a settlement of grievances makes it necessary to say 'no' again and again." (FO 371/23020, C 8757, signed Henderson, June 6, 1939.)

A week later, Sargent took a very negative stance on Henderson's letter. Contrary to the ambassador, he demanded that England say "no" to a fair settlement of German complaints regarding Poland. He justified the English "no" to a German-Polish compromise solution with completely untrue assertions, e.g.: "Hitler demands a 100% solution, if necessary in stages, i.e. 1. the annexation of Danzig and the corridor. 2. the restoration of Germany's pre-war eastern borders, and 3. the reduction of Poland to a vassal state...." Hitler had demanded neither the corridor nor Germany's pre-war borders in the east, let alone that he wanted to make Poland a vassal state. On the contrary: Poland was to be a strong ally that could, if necessary, support Germany militarily against Russia. Sargent believed that the only option now was to make tactical moves and wait until Hitler attempted to force his goal. He gave his

government the familiar Weizsäcker advice:

"But in order to bring Hitler to this point, it will be necessary for His Majesty's government to adhere to the words of Mr. von Weizsäcker, to maintain a threatening silence, i.e. we must wait for Hitler's first move and in the meantime refrain from any action in Warsaw or elsewhere that might encourage Hitler in his belief that, by maintaining the current pressure, we would sooner or later force the Poles to submit to the first stage of his 100% demand." (FO 371/23020, signed Sargent, June 14, 1939.)

Vansittart adds a handwritten note to Sargent's memo: "Sir N. Henderson always talks about finding a solution that Hitler will accept. Why does he never consider that Hitler might find one that we would accept? Henderson himself provides the answer: he only sees the German point of view." Cadogan agrees with Sargent's note, also in a handwritten note.

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Weizsäcker demands an end to England's "threatening silence"

On June 11, 1939, Weizsäcker had advised the British government via the High Commissioner of Danzig, Burckhardt:

"England must maintain a firm front, a 'threatening silence' – silence menagant. Otherwise, Mr. von Ribbentrop would once again be proven right in his assertion that the British would not march. Weizsäcker believed that the door for negotiations should remain ajar, but only just." (Makins Memorandum of June 12, 1939, DBFP VI, No. 36.)

Weizsäcker's words about the "silence menagant" were so important to the British that they were passed on to all mission chiefs with the order to always keep Weizsäcker's thesis in mind during their official talks. The Polish ambassador, Count Raczynski, was also informed of this guideline of British policy. This shows once again that Chamberlain was guided by the advice of the German conspirators. Weizsäcker declared quite arbitrarily, in response to Burckhardt's question as to why "the Germans had not yet defined their wishes," that it was already too late for that. (DBFP VI, No. 36.) This reply, addressed to England, enabled Sargent to attribute the most fantastic goals, already quoted, to Hitler. At the same time, Burckhardt passed on further important information to the British government via Roger Makins. The High Commissioner had just spoken to Gauleiter Forster, who had been instructed by Hitler to remain calm in Danzig and not allow any incidents to occur. Burckhardt also mentioned Ribbentrop, who told him that Germany was seeking a compromise, but that the Poles were "crazy." No statesman other than Hitler could have offered the Polish government such a generous settlement. Hitler had even declared himself willing to defend the "British Empire"! Burckhardt's question, "Against whom?", was considered very witty by some at the time. History has since shown that England would have had to defend itself against everyone except Germany, if it had been able to do so. Of course, Burckhardt also spoke with Weizsäcker, whose thesis of "silence menacant" he supported, and advised the English to maintain an absolutely firm front. (Burckhardt, Meine Danziger Mission, p. 344. Signed Makins, Memorandum. DBFP VI, No. 36.)

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Kirkpatrick writes about the Burckhardt-Makins conversation on June 11, 1939:

"This is an interesting report and convincing as far as the immediate future is concerned. However, Burckhardt, like everyone else, seems unable to make any concrete proposal for a settlement that would satisfy both parties—Germans and Poles. The most important points are the following:

1. Great Britain should continue to take an absolutely firm stance. This is the path taken by Baron von Weizsäcker and all well-disposed Germans. There is no doubt that the Germans are today in no position, either materially or morally, to contemplate a war on two fronts, and our best chance lies in maintaining a dangerous (precarious) peace by showing Mr. Hitler that we will not be intimidated into making concessions.

2. Mr. Burckhardt recommends his own return to Danzig. I have no doubt that this is the right thing to do, and if it is agreed, we should make the necessary arrangements with the Tripartite Committee. Perhaps the first step should be to invite the Swedish minister to come and explain the situation to him.

3. It is noteworthy that Mr. Burckhardt is in favor of an agreement with Russia. This is all the more serious given that he is a conservative Swiss who fundamentally rejects communism and who, moreover, has been able to observe the effect in Germany of our negotiations with Russia.

Should it be decided that this report is to be printed and circulated, I suggest that the name of Baron von Weizsäcker be omitted and replaced by the phrase 'A high-ranking German official'. (FO 23020, C 8459, signed Kirkpatrick, June 13, 1939 – copies of this document were sent to Berlin, Paris, Warsaw, Stockholm, Rome, Colonel Beck, and the Prime Minister.)

Henderson also commented again on Burckhardt's conversation with Makins in a personal letter to Sargent. He knew from von Weizsäcker that Gauleiter Forster had been instructed by Hitler himself to avoid incidents in Danzig. It had always been Henderson's view that, thanks to his "Austrian sloppiness," Hitler allowed his associates to do pretty much whatever they wanted until he himself intervened. Henderson therefore considered Forster's statement that he had "acted on his own initiative up to now, but would not do so in the future" to be correct. Henderson concluded from this that Hitler "a) did not want to be forced into dangerous risks and b) that everything that would happen would be based on Hitler's orders, so that we would then have to draw the necessary conclusions." Henderson was asked by von Weizsäcker what he would do with Ribbentrop.

He replied that he had not been to the Foreign Office for over a month. Henderson considered it important, in accordance with his earlier recommendation, to eliminate Ribbentrop. He therefore made no attempt to visit the Foreign Minister to discuss the matter with him. He wrote to Sargent:

"If Ribbentrop is completely ignored, Hitler will eventually believe that he is not so important. That was one reason why I had several conversations with Göring. But at the moment Ribbentrop is the most important person, and I can do no more than talk to everyone and subtly let them know that all mistakes are, sous-entendu, i.e., of course, made by Ribbentrop." (FO 371/ 23020, C 8660, June 16, 1939, Henderson to Sargent.)

Goerdeler: "Our only chance is to involve Germany and Italy in a war."

On May 30, 1939, Goerdeler had already presented his latest "peace plan" to Foreign Office official

Ashton-Gwatkin. In this memorandum, Goerdeler called on England and France to "regain and maintain leadership in world politics under all circumstances. The initiative must never again fall into the hands of the Axis powers... England and France should no longer ask other powers to maintain peace, but should demand peace." According to Goerdeler's vision, this peace should be based "on the principles of justice, decency, law, and order." Vansitart writes: "The vast majority of the German people will gladly accept such a peace. Confident that such a plan is sincere, honest, and reliable, it will no longer listen to the cries of war." Kirkpatrick, on the other hand, distances himself from Goerdeler's peace fantasies with the words: "It is all well and good to talk about a plan for a better Europe without armaments and lasting peace. The difficulty, however, lies in implementing such a plan. Dr. Goerdeler still hopes to be able to eliminate Hitler through a tactical move, but I fear that this will not be so easy to achieve." Sargent writes similarly: "Dr. Goerdeler makes these proposals to us at regular intervals. We are always faced with the same dilemma: either our plan meets German demands to such an extent that Hitler can accept it, in which case it will be

achieve more bloodless victories and secure Danzig, as well as the colonies, raw materials, etc., in exchange for promises to behave well in the future. No one will believe that. His position in Germany will be immeasurably strengthened, and Dr. Goerdeler's friends will have no pretext or inclination to stage a coup. Or our plan will be so vague and indefinite that Hitler will not need to give a definitive answer, as he did with President Roosevelt's proposal in April 1939. The fact, for example, that the conspirators did not strike after President Roosevelt's proposals is, in my opinion, a warning to us not to trust Dr. Goerdeler's assurances too much."

Ashton-Gwatkin, to whom Dr. Goerdeler had personally explained his peace plan, was the most detailed in his comments:

"Goerdeler told me that he had not forgotten what I had told him was impossible, namely to expect the British government to carry out a coup d'état for the German people. But he demanded an assurance for the German people regarding the attitude of the foreign powers if they themselves staged a coup. He demanded that the British or French government should present a plan for the creation of a better Europe. This plan was to be announced to the world in a speech by a leading statesman, i.e., by Mr. Chamberlain or Mr. Daladier, broadcast on radio throughout the world and especially in Germany. Copies were to be officially handed over by the ambassadors of the German government, and the government was to be asked for a reply. The representatives of the other powers in Berlin should support this initiative and convey their governments' recommendations for the acceptance of this plan. Goerdeler discussed the matter in Paris and received considerable encouragement from M. Paul Reynaud and M. Leger ...

Goerdeler believed that the proposal should be made sometime in July, in any case before the party congress speech in September. He believed that the whole matter would then be settled by the end of October. For military reasons, the months of September and October are particularly important. The army leaders are aware that they will have to deal with the SS troops, because the liquidation of the SS organization and the Gestapo is the central point of their policy. As part of their plan, they would immediately take possession of the SS headquarters, including the secret files, on the basis of which they would then take legal action against the leaders of the Nazi party for the crimes they had committed. It would be possible to keep Hitler if he would accept the position of president in a golden cage, but without political power or authority over the army..." (FO 371/22973, C 8004, May 30, 1939.)

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It is no wonder that Chamberlain's closest associates viewed Goerdeler's "peace plan" with skepticism, for they did not believe, as Roberts puts it, that public support from the English side would "prompt the German army to stage a coup in the Reich." They were entitled to this view, because Dr. Goerdeler himself had told Ashton-Gwatkin five days earlier: "If Hitler gives the order to march against Poland, the army will certainly march. For the question of regaining Danzig and the Corridor is very close to the hearts of the army officers, more so than was the case with Austria and the Sudetenland... The only chance of separating Hitler and the army would be to embroil Germany and Italy in a war." Shortly afterwards, Goerdeler wrote in a letter to Vansitart:

"It is, of course, very depressing for us German moderates that the Western powers are not seizing their opportunity. An economic offensive, disguised as a private initiative, could certainly tear apart the fragile relations between Hitler and his generals, deprive Hitler of the choice of timing and action, and force him to make very difficult decisions. Strong pressure on Italy, for example, would confront Hitler with the highly unpopular step, even the great danger, of providing military aid to Italy!" (FO 371/23008, C 7729, C 7769 and FO 371/23009, C 8923, May 25 and June 16, 1939.)

The German conspirators realized that there was still no certainty that the Western powers would follow their advice. Dr. Brüning also intervened again with his recommendations. Although he admired the British radio broadcasts in German, he criticized the fact that the speeches of prominent English politicians were not well received by German listeners. Hitler's "strongest propaganda weapon is, first, the 'encirclement,' which is regarded by the vast majority of Germans as a real danger—and second, President Roosevelt's speech; the comparison between Roosevelt and Wilson's Fourteen Points has been a complete success." On the other hand, the "underground organization of the old political parties, his own for example, is effective." When asked about the future of German politics, Brüning replied with the famous words: "Nothing is as successful as success, and as long as Hitler is allowed to have it, the much-discussed theories of a Reichswehr coup remain nothing but wishful thinking." (FO 371/23008, C 8027, May 24, 1939, Mr. Joung to Mr. Warner.)

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Stage directions by the Kordt brothers

At the beginning of June, Theo Kordt, chargé d'affaires at the German Embassy in London, left for Berlin to obtain new instructions. On June 13, he returned to the British capital and contacted his French friend Maillaud. That same day, this representative of the Havas press agency sent a transcript of his conversation with Kordt to the French Embassy in London and to Ridsdale in the Foreign Office's news department. Ridsdale, for his part, immediately contacted his colleague Kirkpatrick to inform him of the latest "secret messages" from Kordt: Hitler had not yet made a decision on the Danzig question. Important troop movements would take place in Germany in July. These involved "heavy concentrations on the western front and the wartime occupation of fortifications in the east.". The German "generals have been consulted about the chances of military success." Keitel is merely a "yes man," Brauchitsch and Halder are "more moderate." All leading military advisers believe that Germany has no chance of success if Russia fights on the side of the Western powers. Public opinion in the Reich can be assessed as follows: "The army is divided and indecisive regarding its oath of

allegiance. The German bourgeoisie is decidedly more sympathetic toward Hitler than it was in September... The workers are nervous and distrustful of the Führer; their loyalty is in doubt... The intelligentsia—i.e., the cream of the educated class—is more hostile to the regime than ever." Kordt recommends that England "maintain" and strengthen its relations with Italy and emphasizes that an "Anglo-Soviet agreement would very likely mean peace," but that failure would be "extremely dangerous." This advice may have been given in two senses. The circle of conspirators was pushing for the outbreak of war, which would give them the chance to eliminate Hitler. Theo Kordt demanded that British counter-propaganda spread throughout the Reich "inform the German public, since Hitler is in a sense afraid of the consequences of his foreign policy." (DBFP VI, p. 707ff. Ridsdale to Kirkpatrick. Secret. June 1, 1939. FO 371/22973.)

Two days later, Erich Kordt also arrived in the English capital on a lightning visit to support his brother with advice on British counterpropaganda. The next day

The next morning, June 16, he also saw Maillaud, who in turn informed Ridsdale of the Foreign Office's news department about the content of the conversation. According to Ridsdale's notes for Kirkpatrick, Erich Kordt had explained that the Germans had contacted the Russians "as a result of an approach made by Mr. von Ribbentrop to the Soviet ambassador in Berlin." But on June 29, Hitler even rejected a trade agreement with the Soviets because the basis proposed by Moscow was "unacceptable" to Germany and Berlin therefore had "no interest in negotiations." (File VI, Doc. 583.) Kordt advised the British to "act quickly if they wanted an agreement with Russia." He also confirmed his brother's message and noted that the King of Italy would "cancel" his visit to Germany, that "Italian heavy artillery was obsolete," and that almost all armament factories in the Po Valley, i.e., "within the range of French bombers," were located there. (DBFP VI, p. 705ff.) Kordt wanted to point out that France could enter into a war against Italy without risk. (For the entire complex of Kordt's visits to London, see A. v.R., Deutsch-Englische Geheimverbindungen, pp. 288-293.)

The content of the record of the secret and confidential conversation between Maillaud and Erich Kordt was commented on in detail by senior Foreign Office officials. Roberts writes, for example, that Kordt's statements correspond to "what Burckhardt told me in Basel, because Kordt – Erich – probably receives much of his information from Weizsäcker." Kirkpatrick writes: "Interesting. It also confirms what we have heard from Reichenau and other sources." With regard to the Kordt memorandum, Sargent recommends informing Sir Nevile Henderson "that we are receiving such information and advice from Germans in official positions." (FO 371/22973, C 8408, June 16, 1939.)

Vansittart vehemently opposes this suggestion: "I disagree with your suggestion in the strongest possible terms. That is what these people fear; they would consider it extremely unfair to them, and so it is. The mere thought of such a breach of trust would dry up this source. We have not the slightest right to speak to Sir Nevile Henderson about Germans 'in official positions'. He would easily guess who is meant. And his indiscretion is well known. This idea must be dropped." To this, Vansittart replied

Sargent:

"Dear Van, am I to understand from your note that any such information given to Nevile Henderson would not be kept secret, in other words that our ambassador is not trustworthy? I cannot think of a

single case offhand where he has been 'leaky' after being asked to keep something to himself. But if that is the case, we are certainly in a very unfortunate position, because it is only fair to our ambassador that he knows that we have received advice of this kind, so that he can form his own opinion of the situation. Furthermore, if he knows nothing, he might misunderstand some of our actions as a result of the advice received. For example, in the first days of last September, Weizsäcker sent us advice via Burckhardt to send a warning to Hitler. Largely on the basis of this advice, the Cabinet decided to instruct Sir Nevile Henderson in Nuremberg to deliver the famous message to Hitler. You will recall that Sir Nevile Henderson caused difficulties and ultimately prevailed. However, if he had known that we were acting on Weizsäcker's advice, he would probably not have refused so emphatically to obey the order." (DBFPII, No. 823.)

Unlike Vansittart, Cadogan noted, similarly to Sargent, that he had confidence in Henderson, who would always keep important matters to himself, even if he sometimes committed minor indiscretions. But Vansittart intervened again in a handwritten marginal note to protect his German informants, writing about Henderson:

"I think that the people concerned believe that he is not a reliable confidant with regard to their views and activities, and since they think so, is it then fair to pass on this particular kind of information, which requires special discretion? ... These people do not believe for a moment, any more than I do, that Henderson would deliberately betray them. But they know him as an indiscreet conversationalist and naturally want to minimize the risk to their lives. Why is it necessary to speak of Germans in 'official positions,' why not simply of 'German sources whom we respect?'" (FO 371/22973, C 8408, June 16, 1939.)

Cadogan writes in his own hand: "All right!" Vansittart's instructions were thus followed, and the documents sent to Henderson referred only to "German sources whom we respect!"

In two personal letters to Halifax, Henderson took a very strong stance against the reports of the Kordt brothers. He was convinced that "Hitler would never unscrupulously start a world war

but he was tormented by the thought that England would fight alongside Poland "for a rotten cause." The British government had to ensure "that our case is as hard as steel," i.e., that an English war against Germany must appear just to the world. There were people in Berlin who were spreading the rumor that Ribbentrop had said after Halifax's last speech, "You see that England will not fight, but the people who say so are those who want war in the sole hope of getting rid of their Nazi rulers." (Henderson to Halifax, June 28 and 24, 1939, DBFP, VI, pp. 709-710.)

Poland or Russia?

The Soviet problem

French Foreign Minister Edouard Daladier had already informed London on June 8 through Ambassador Phipps that we must "win Russia over as soon as possible." He believed that the Soviets were "quite offended because no one of higher rank than Strang was going to Moscow" and therefore suggested that "an English and a French general should either accompany Strang or follow him to

Russia very soon thereafter in order to begin immediate military talks and express our great confidence in the Soviets." In this document, Phipps, relying on information from the French ambassador in Berlin, Coulondre, reported even more detail than Theo Kordt about Hitler's talks with his generals. Hitler had asked Keitel and Brauchitsch:

"1. What will happen if I attack Poland and it is supported by Great Britain and France? Both generals replied that Germany could defeat the Polish state within a month, and General Keitel said that Germany would certainly defeat Great Britain and France.

2. What will happen if, in the above case, Russia also marches against me? General Keitel replied that Germany would win. General von Brauchitsch said that Germany would be defeated." (FO 371/23068, C 864.)

However, according to the English version prepared by MacDonald, both Generals Keitel and Brauchitsch told Hitler that Germany would lose a war against England, France, and Russia. This is confirmed by Maillaud. (FO 371/23068, C 864.) Going into detail about the alleged recent conversation between Coulondre in Berlin and Generals Keitel and Brauchitsch, Henderson wrote to Kirkpatrick:

"There was no such conversation! Quite apart from the fact that these two generals would certainly never have spoken in the manner described if Coulondre had met with them. Coulondre heard the story about the generals' response to Hitler's questions from a colleague, and this colleague had heard it from a 'senior official' in the Foreign Office with whom he was very friendly.

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has been retold. Of course, I don't know how this official, who certainly does not belong to the 'highest' ranks, obtained his information, although I can guess who Coulondre's colleague was. Coulondre did not want to tell me his name, but when I guessed it, he confirmed that I was right... What happened to Coulondre came from a third party, so no significance can be attached to the words." (FO 371/23069, C 8915, June 15, 1939. Henderson to Kirkpatrick.)

Henderson ends his letter by stating that the whole matter only interests him because Keitel "has become a complete 'yes man' according to other sources, while Brauchitsch is still able to judge objectively like a soldier." With these references, Henderson merely wanted to inform his government of the value of the two generals for a coming coup, because in reality he did not believe the whole story. In mid-June, the conspirators sent a message to Lord Lloyd, former High Commissioner of Egypt, to inform him "in the strictest confidence" that General Brauchitsch had told the informant "that the zero hour for the attack on Poland had been set by Hitler for August 31, and that he could finish off the Nazi regime on the first day of mobilization.". A few days later, Halifax gave a very sharp speech at Chatham House, "prompted at the last minute by rumors of an imminent coup in Danzig, as well as reports that Ribbentrop was still telling Hitler that England would not fight." (Oliver Harvey's Diaries, June 19 and July 1, 1939.) - The eternally unchanging lie!

While some forces in the Foreign Office were pushing for an alliance with Moscow, Chamberlain was opposed to an alliance with the Soviet Union because England would then have lost Poland as an ally. On June 5, Halifax was told by journalist Wickham Steed that he knew from very good sources that Hitler was now seeking good relations with Moscow. Hitler intended to uphold the German-Polish pact

of 1934 and bring Danzig into the Reich by peaceful means without disrupting Polish economic interests there. These plans had been thwarted by Poland's alliance with Great Britain. Poland must establish a pro-German government and ensure a friendly attitude toward the Reich. Hitler hoped that the British would accept this "peaceful development" despite the Anglo-Polish treaty. Since the Danzig area is not Polish and there are no troops stationed there, Germany would not need to take any action against Poland if "Danzig unites with

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proclaimed to the Reich and subsequently occupied by German troops." Responsibility for a military attack on Germany or Danzig would then fall together with the "moral responsibility for such an aggression against Poland." These remarks are supplemented by the following summary: "Hitler and his accomplices are convinced that under the present conditions the Axis cannot wage war against the West. They therefore believe that everything depends on a diplomatic and moral defeat of the West, which would rule out any further coalition between the Western powers and Eastern Europe. Germany could then build up its imperial territory to the Russian borders and lay the foundations for its continental Eurasian world empire. The Western powers could make peace with this empire on condition that they renounce all political cooperation with Eastern Europe, including Russia. In return, Germany would be prepared to guarantee the British and French empires. These are Hitler's ultimate goals in a conflict with Poland. His motto is: No war, and certainly not a world war. The Third Reich is striving for a world empire without a world war." (FO 371/22975, C 10981, July 5, 1939.) Halifax took this fantastic news so seriously that W. I. Mallet had to ask journalist Wickham Steed for the names of his alleged sources. Wickham Steed wanted to give them to him verbally.

Polish plans for the partition of a defeated Germany A flying visit

Before the Russian problem in England could be tackled, the situation in Poland had to be tested, because Colonel Beck had so far refused to consider negotiations in which the Soviets would also participate. Strang was therefore sent to Poland with Jebb at the beginning of June 1939. Jebb called the report on this visit "A Flying Visit":

"A week in Poland gave me some definite impressions. Since I do not claim to have any special knowledge of that country, they may be wrong. But the impressions were vivid and were generally confirmed by conscientious and knowledgeable observers, including our excellent embassy. Although I may repeat some things that have already been reported, I can perhaps

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but describe it in a new and different light. What struck me most was the apparent calm and confidence of the Poles I spoke to. I believe that some are too trusting and ignore the real danger of an attack by the disciplined and motorized German divisions. $S.M. The vice-consul in Katowice told me, for example, that since our guarantee, the Polish officials there have been "very cocky" and are talking about a quick defeat of Germany and the occupation of Breslau. Even the farmers on an estate south of

Thorn, where I spent a refreshing weekend, wanted to attack the Germans, as the son of the house assured me. This was also confirmed to me by the very 'intelligent head of the economic department in the Foreign Ministry, Mr. Wszelaki, who said that the belligerence and anti-German sentiment of the peasants was based partly on racial and partly on economic reasons—population growth and the resulting appetite for German farmland. Wszelaki actually said that he feared a terrible massacre among the German-Polish farmers at the outbreak of war and that it would be "difficult to prevent." Furthermore, it seems that the Polish farmers are now less aware of the Russian threat, although they remain anti-Russian. My friends did not want to say directly that this could trigger a new Pan-Slavism, but they admitted that, in view of the continuing German pressure, something similar could happen à la longue.

Although exaggerated confidence and chauvinism may prevail among provincial officials, as well as among the petty bourgeoisie and, to a lesser extent, among the peasants, I did not have the impression that these sentiments are very widespread in the capital. The Foreign Ministry is almost entirely in the hands of Colonel Beck. But his chief collaborator, Count Lubienski, cannot in any way be accused of being rash or anti-German. Lubienski actually strikes me as a rather disingenuous and cunning fellow. He was born in Kiev and served in the Russian cavalry throughout the war. In many respects a Russian type, he obviously believes in the effectiveness of double-dealing. On the whole, he still seems to be suspicious of our policy toward Danzig, for he pointed out that Poland could very easily have reached an agreement with Germany before turning to us. He also seems to have been quite nervous about the Ruholiff correspondence in The Times.

Apart from him, however, the more or less pro-English officials were both cautious and correct. They admitted that it would be foolish of Poland to provoke Germany. But they repeated, without wishing to offend us, that they could deal better with the Germans than we could. In any case, there were certain concessions with regard to Danzig that no Pole would willingly admit. They could not tolerate the presence of German soldiers in the Danzig area, nor could they accept Danzig's economic annexation to the Reich. The former would mean that the corridor could not be held militarily, the latter that Polish trade would be cut off.

be strangled, as it could not be conducted through Gdynia alone. In both cases, Poland's independence would be seriously endangered. Furthermore, there was no parallel between the Danzigers and the Sudeten Germans. The Danzigers were completely free to be as Nazi as they wanted, and it was also obvious that they were better off under the current regime than they would be if they were part of Germany. In short, all Poles were deeply convinced of the fairness of the current arrangement and were outraged that the British were talking about the "fairness" of Hitler's demand. If it was a question of justice, they wanted to know what the Germans were doing in Prague!

Of course, I don't know what the Polish military thinks. I can only say that the colonel who sat next to me at dinner—the right-hand man of General Stachiewitz, Chief of the General Staff—is an intelligent and reasonable man. He openly admitted that the Polish army was inadequate in some respects, but he was confident that it would fight very well if necessary.

I learned the following Polish plan partly from him and partly from other people: East Prussia was to be attacked at the outbreak of war because it would be very difficult for the Germans to build up a rapid and adequate defense of this province. In addition, this province could be attacked from several sides at once. The invigorating effect of an occupation of Königsberg would, it was hoped, compensate for the

inevitable retreat from the protruding western line of defense. In any case, Poland did not necessarily have to be defeated, even if it withdrew to the Vistula line. And by the time the Polish armies arrived there, both the Germans and the Poles could suffer from a shortage of certain supplies. It was emphasized that the war in the east would probably be an "open" one with room for maneuver, and that this would be to the advantage of the Poles, at least in the beginning. To sound out my Polish friends, I used to ask them at a certain point what they would do with the Germans if the fortunes of war decided in their favor, which they seemed to assume. No two people gave me the same answer to this awkward question. But in general, people seemed to believe that Germany would have to be divided into two or more parts, and that the larger part should consist of a southern and Catholic bloc, perhaps under Archduke Otto. In any case, it seems to be generally assumed that East Prussia will be annexed by Poland. The deputy head of the Eastern Department of the Foreign Ministry actually said that this was the final Polish plan. He justified this by saying that the population of East Prussia was declining, that many areas there were Polish anyway, that a population exchange could be arranged in any case, and that Poland, a young and rapidly growing state, must have a coastline commensurate with its national importance.

If I am not mistaken, there is an even larger and more vague plan for Poland's future after a victorious war against Germany. This is the concept of a federal Poland including Lithuania with a kind of autonomy for the Ruthenians. According to this vision, Warsaw would be the center of a huge agglomeration whose western borders would extend almost to the Oder River and whose southern borders could reach a newly rebuilt Hungary.

I mention this dream only as evidence of thoughts that the Poles may secretly harbor. I do not want to give the impression that reasonable Poles regard these projects as a feasible policy or believe that they can be realized now or in many years to come. There are only a few Poles in official positions who are not aware of the very real danger of war with Germany. And very many seem to realize that this would in fact mean a retreat into the interior of the country, a retreat that might not compensate for the occupation of East Prussia, where the existing lines of defense are very strong, apart from the current difficulties in reinforcing them. However, they believe that in a general war following a German attack on Poland, Germany would ultimately be defeated. Then the Polish army, albeit badly battered, would reappear from the Pripyat marshes or the "urforest" of Bialobiezca to establish a greater Poland similar to that of 1919. This belief is neither pathetic nor fantastical. In my opinion, the Poles are right to point out that the German situation, whether military, economic, or domestic, is much weaker than German propaganda would have us believe. They believe that German collapse in some form is a very real possibility within a year of the outbreak of general war. And while they do not doubt that the Germans will fight extremely well in the initial phase, they are convinced that the encirclement will hold and that a blockade will be effective much earlier than in 1914–18. On this point, however, I do not believe that the Polish General Staff is overly optimistic. My friend, the colonel, admitted that Romania is the weak link in the chain, and he was less confident than I am that the Germans will not be able to seize and transport large quantities of Romanian oil.

However, the general consensus seemed to me to be that, in Poland's view, regardless of the prospects of a war with Germany, it was better to fight than to submit. The example of Czechoslovakia had really affected the Poles deeply. And it was the fate of the Bohemians as much as our guarantee that was responsible for the change in Polish policy. Moreover, the Poles are a young and robust people. Their annual contingent of young men is not much smaller than that of Greater Germany—a country twice as large. The men who rule Poland today are

Mostly in their forties. This is the real reason for the difference between Poland's attitude toward war and that of Great Britain. For Poles, the next war is simply the next war. They have experienced many in the past and expect many more in the future. There is no talk of the collapse of civilization, and I don't think it's just because they have little civilization to lose. On the contrary, Polish culture is something very real. It is also something that, according to the Poles, would be more easily destroyed by docile submission to Hitler than by fighting his motorized troops. What we understand by civilization, especially a large and prosperous middle class, is not what they mean, especially since they are mainly farmers and the middle class is extremely small. That is why the sight of England horrified by the collapse of civilization evokes in Poles the vision of a respectable old lady laden with packages trying in vain to get on a bus. I am not claiming, of course, that this explanation is justified. I am merely trying to convey the Polish point of view.

I naturally did my best to advise the Poles in the spirit of Sorel, "strength lies in moderation," and to impress upon them how unwise excessive anti-German propaganda was. At the same time, I urged them to improve their own propaganda and to make the decisive reasons for Poland's attitude and policy clearer. I did not need to do this at the embassy, as they were already constantly drumming it into them. But I believe that this cannot be said often enough.

I would like to make one more comment on the Ukrainian question. As far as

I understood Mr. Middleton ... , the undoubtedly existing dissatisfaction among the Ruthenians will not greatly disturb the Poles at the moment ...

I understood Mr. Middleton ... the undoubtedly existing dissatisfaction among the Ruthenians is not very disturbing to the Poles at the moment ...

Three Jewish students have been murdered by Polish students since the beginning of the semester, which is seen as a climax. It is, of course, quite clear that the rise of the Polish middle class is making the Jewish question in Poland increasingly acute.

After all, many educated Poles cannot find employment unless a Jew, who probably understands his job better, is fired first. Unless the industrialization of the country is pushed through quickly or the Jews are expelled, the problem will not be solved without pressure.

In summary, I come to the conclusion that our guarantee to Poland was, on the whole, a less dangerous gamble than I initially feared. My second conclusion is that, having given the guarantee and things being as they are, we have no choice but to help the Poles resist by force any "solution" to the Danzig question that would involve either German military occupation or German control of customs. Finally, it is my personal conviction that

the Poles would seriously consider revising their current attitude toward Germany. Even if they did not succeed in reconciling themselves with the Germans, which they probably would not, this first sign of our real weakness would be a signal to the Russians to come to an agreement with the Germans on the basis of a fourth partition of Poland. If that happened, the consequences for our own position in the

world would be clear even to the most primitive intelligence. In view of such possibilities, it is disturbing to hear so many influential people in this country repeatedly say that they would never allow themselves to be persuaded by the short-sightedness of the Foreign Office to die for Danzig." (FO 371/23020, signed Jebb, June 9, 1939: Strang has seen this and agrees. Kirkpatrick: "The only safe course for us is to show a determined front if we do not want to irrevocably break down the dam against German aggression." Cadogan's handwritten note: "The report also shows what we know from other sources, namely that there is a rather reckless confidence in certain circles in Poland... I have some confidence in Mr. Beck." - This report is also signed by Sargent, Vansittart, and Halifax. -)

The Poles also believed that the Reich was weak domestically and that the current government would be overthrown sooner or later. They also believed in the effectiveness of a blockade, but according to British calculations, this would only be effective in a two-front war. Since Russia, having no common border with Germany, could not come to the aid of the British, Poland was forced to form the eastern arm of the encirclement. Colonel Beck sacrificed his country and set up the second front. Chamberlain, however, abandoned Poland and did not even consider building up the first front in the west or relieving Poland with a British offensive. This was a "cruel and cynical" offense against the small country, as Cadogan put it. (Cadogan Diaries, p. 167.)

Strang, an outstanding Foreign Office official who was not very familiar with Polish affairs, was sent to Warsaw to convey the British wishes. One thing is certain, and Strang emphasizes it, that the Poles had become more presumptuous as a result of the British guarantee. Even though they said that in the early stages of a war against Germany they would probably have to retreat into the interior of the country, they believed that they could simultaneously conquer Danzig and East Prussia and, at the end of the great war, emerge victorious and dismember Germany. That was the Polish plan. The Poles were not willing to die for Danzig alone, but they were willing to risk a second world war for the establishment of a Greater Poland.

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Strang warned his government not to tamper with the guarantee once given to Poland, as this could drive Warsaw into Berlin's arms. It could even tempt Russia to join Germany in a fourth partition of the Polish state. England therefore had no choice but to force the Poles to oppose any change in Danzig and the Corridor, however reasonable, with force. Colonel Beck had been forced to reject the very moderate German proposals of October 1938 in March 1939. Strang himself advised the Poles only to exercise "restraint" and warned against "excessive anti-German propaganda" so as not to expose themselves as aggressors. The report on the British flying visit to Poland in June 1939 was written by Jebb but expressly "approved" by Strang. The Jebb report confirmed what Cadogan had already gleaned from other sources: Poland had been led to adopt a "light-hearted and light-headed" attitude by the British guarantee. (Memorandum by Jebb, June 13, 1939; FO 371/23020/7993.)

Poland must not negotiate

On July 4, 1939, Henderson wrote a private letter to Cadogan to express his fears:

"I am convinced that Hitler has no immediate intention of staging a military coup or bringing about

constitutional change in Danzig. I fear rather a repetition, mutatis mutandis, with regard to Danzig, i.e., the events of May 21, 1938, which were the immediate cause of the September crisis.

It must not be forgotten that the speech by the Secretary of State – Halifax – at Chatham House is regarded by all Germans and by many of my neutral colleagues as a blank check for Poland. The Secretary of State has repeatedly told me what Germany fears. But the only thing Germany fears is a truly serious incident provoked by the Poles. Hitler never misses an opportunity. Military preparations in Danzig, which admittedly could support constitutional changes to the status of the Free City, are at least also intended to resist a possible Polish coup.

If nothing else sensational happens in Danzig, as I believe, it would therefore be a serious mistake on the part of the foreign press to claim, as it did last May, that the firm stance of the Western powers has brought Hitler to his senses... Hitler wants peace and will do nothing on his part to accelerate the conflict." (FO 800/294, signed Nevile Henderson, July 4, 1939.)

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URGENT. u a i rs) i 4th July,1939. er. A: *]) /

Dear Alec,

I am convinced in my own mind that Hitler has no immediate intention not only of any military coup but also of any constitutional change in Danzig. I am far more impressed with danger of repetition, mutatis mutandis as far as Danzig is concerned, of incident of May 21st last year which was direct cause of September crisis.

It must be borne in mind that the Secretary of State's Chatham House speech is regarded by all Germans as well as by many of my neutral colleagues here as a blank check to Poland. As the State Secretary has constantly repeated to me, what Germany fears, and what Germany alone fears, is a really serious incident provoked by Poles. Hitler is a man who neglects no eventuality. Militaristic preparations at Danzig, while admittedly they might serve as support for a constitutional

modification. ...

modification. ...

The Honorable Sir Alexander Cadogan, GC.H.&; CB,

Foreign Office,

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BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN.

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modification of status of Free City have at least as much object of resisting any possible Polish coup,. If nothing further sensational happens at Danzig,

as I believe it would consequently be a grave mistake

11 foreign press were as in May last year to claim that the firm attitude of the Western Powers had brought Hitler to reason. I have confidence in the categorical assurances of the State Secretary and of the Italian Ambassador—since Italy is vitally interested in preserving peace—that the Polish authorities will not be allowed to act in a manner that would provoke the West.

11 foreign press were as in May last year to claim that the firm attitude of Western powers has brought Hitler to reason. I have confidence in the categorical assurances of the State Secretary and of the Italian Ambassador—since Italy is vitally interested in preserving peace—and both are consistent in their view that Hitler wants peace.

and will for his part do nothing to precipitate a conflict.

and will, for his part, do nothing to precipitate a conflict.

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Letter from British Ambassador Henderson to Sir Alexander Cadogan dated July 4, 1939, document FO 800/294

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The British guarantee and the public declarations by members of the British government stirred up chauvinistic emotions among the Poles during the summer months. The fears expressed by Henderson in his private letter to Sir Alexander Cadogan on July 4 were confirmed on the same day by the Paris nuncio Valeri in a message to the Vatican Secretary of State, Cardinal Maglione:

In my opinion, neither London nor Paris recommends moderation in Warsaw... With regard to the international situation, I must tell Your Excellency that from here—Paris—the situation still looks very serious, and that the danger of an armed conflict is becoming increasingly likely, namely due to the crisis over Danzig. In my discussions at the Quai d'Orsay, I have gained the clear conviction that neither France nor Great Britain intends to exert any pressure on Poland to moderate its position or to agree to negotiations with Germany. The Western powers are therefore, as has been publicly stated, prepared to march alongside Poland if the latter decides to take up arms against Germany in order to defend its threatened rights. France and England have therefore placed the decision on the casus belli in Poland's hands. (Vatican Documents, Volume I, Doc. No. 84, p. 187.)

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Take out Ribbentrop!

Count Schwerin's special mission in London

The conspirators relentlessly supplied London with secret messages and instructions on how best to bring Germany to its knees. Count Schwerin took on this task on behalf of the Foreign Armies West department of the German Army General Staff. The Bardays Bank was asked by a Mr. Pakard from Berlin-Wilmersdorf to "give Count von Schwerin a friendly reception and discuss the current political situation openly with him... Schwerin was to receive recommendations for other prominent banks in the City." The German ambassador von Dirksen visited Count Schwerin, who was staying at the Hamilton House, in person on June 20 and left his card there in an open envelope. A Baron Wilhelm von Richthofen is said to have added his own business card to that of the ambassador, and the chargé d'affaires von Selzam also paid a private visit to Count Schwerin. The Dutchman Rykens from the Unilever Group had a long telephone conversation with Schwerin, who later that evening sent a letter to Conwell-Evans. Because of these many contacts, Schwerin gave the impression that he was in London on an "official" mission and not on a semi-private mission, as an Englishman put it in a "secret and personal report." In reality, Count Schwerin was in London as an emissary of the conspirators to give further advice to British propaganda. He readily declared that the Führer only had "expansionist ambitions in the East and wanted to establish a unified system under German domination." In this, the German people stood behind Hitler, who had no European concept. Schwerin declared that "the Führer could only be forced to retreat by an overwhelming power" and proposed the conclusion of an Anglo-Russian pact, as well as a reshuffle of the British government. Foreign observers should learn more about the rearmament and about British intentions to attack. England should therefore bluff and display a power it did not possess, as Kordt had been demanding for months. "If war came, it would end as it did in 1918." (FO 371/22964, June 15 and 26, 1939.)

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Count Schwerin also spoke with Colonel H. St. C. Smallwood. He told him that Hitler did not accept advice, but "listened to his voices like Saint Joan"! Schwerin declared himself willing to emphasize England's strength in German army circles. When he spoke of the conspirators, he said "we"; when he spoke of the government, i.e., of Hitler, he said "they." (FO 371/22990, C 9287, June 29, 1939.) Count Schwerin expressed great satisfaction to his English friends about Halifax's Chatham speech, as it was much sharper than previous ones. However, he wondered whether Halifax would carry out everything he had announced. Count Schwerin considered it most important that England conclude a treaty with Russia, as this was the only thing that would impress Hitler. (FO 800/316, June 30, 1939.) The head of the British Navy's Intelligence Department, Rear Admiral J. H. Godfrey, informed Jebb of what Count Schwerin had told him during a conversation:

"The Germans misunderstand the moderate language of English politicians, especially that of Chamberlain and Halifax. They understand Roosevelt better. The only thing that influences them is the display of strength. The British Navy is respected. They know it is strong, but they underestimate the Luftwaffe just as we underestimated the strength of the German Air Force four years ago.

Hitler probably receives no news from abroad. He probably does not know to what extent British opinion has changed since October 1938. Herein lies the great danger that Hitler may act in Danzig on the assumption that we will remain passive. As long as Chamberlain is Prime Minister, most Germans will continue to believe that we are pursuing a policy of peace, no matter what we say. It is very

difficult for outsiders and even for those around him to explain anything to Hitler, as he always speaks for himself. It was a mistake to believe that Hitler is influenced by Ribbentrop or anyone else. He examines the current issue very carefully, reads everything that is said about it, and nothing will change his mind once he has made a decision.

When asked what we should do to "show our strength," Schwerin replied that we should invite German officers to visit our airports and organize more demonstrations. German officers should also visit French airports and observe the cooperation between French and British aircraft. This would cause a great sensation, because the Germans underestimate the extent and efficiency of Anglo-French cooperation. German officers should also visit Polish airfields. The conclusion of the Anglo-Russian pact and the inclusion of Churchill in the government would impress the Germans and convince them that we mean business.

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Count Schwerin was well aware of the impact of an economic blockade and understood when I told him that it would not be difficult to implement. This time, we knew what was necessary. I reminded him of the impact of the British naval mobilization in September 1938, which paralyzed the merchant fleet.... Count Schwerin repeatedly demanded that Britain demonstrate its strength." (FO 371/22990, C 9275, June 28, 1939, addressed to A. M. G. Jebb.)

The old slander that Hitler was not properly informed about the situation in England was intended solely for propaganda purposes. No reasonable Englishman could have believed this when it was said at the same time that Hitler read everything that was written about the current situation. Count Schwerin was one of the British government's main sources of information. His countless secret pieces of advice always culminated in the demand that England must build up a "powerful war machine" because Hitler wanted to destroy the British Empire. Since every word Schwerin said "could cost him his head," people in England did not know whether he was "a reckless chatterbox or an exceptionally clever man." (FO 371/22974, C 9819, June 30, 1939, signed H. G. Early, read by Jebb, Kirkpatrick, and Roberts, who hopes that the fleet and air announcements will help show Germany that we mean business.) On July 3 and 6, 1939, Lieutenant Colonel Count Schwerin held further talks with Godfrey. Jebb made a note of this:

"Count Schwerin demanded that if we wanted to fight Germany because of a 'coup' in Danzig, we should not only say so unequivocally, but also do something quite spectacular. This would mean pretty much everything between the mobilization of the fleet and Churchill's entry into the government. He also repeated the proposal that 1. we should bring some British aircraft to French airfields and invite the Germans to inspect them there, and 2. that we should invite General Milch to this country to allow him to inspect the strength of our air preparations ... Schwerin believed that Hitler had already decided to take Danzig before September and that nothing would deter him from this course... We replied very emphatically that it was out of the question that England would not stand by Poland if it became involved in a war with Germany over a "coup" in Danzig. Our position had improved enormously since last September. Our air force was now very strong. Our air defense had been perfected, and we now had conscription. Our blockade preparations were complete, so that we could put them into effect within 14 days, something that had taken us years in the last war... The Germans could only win through a successful "blitzkrieg," the victory of which had become very questionable.

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The famous German "living space" would be turned into a "death space" and Germany would be left in ruins, as it was after the Thirty Years' War. Did the German government really want to risk the newly won unity of the Reich just to annex a small German town whose independence was crucial to Poland's "living space"? After Munich, Hitler had assumed that the British would hand over Central and Eastern Europe to him in any case. A peaceful German penetration of the East had been destroyed by the German occupation of Prague. This fact, and not our guarantee, was responsible for the current obstacles to German expansion plans." (FO 371/22974, C 9818, July 30, 1939.)

Count Schwerin's statements are of particular interest because he assumes that Hitler will stage a "coup" in Danzig. A coup in Danzig never took place, but all British countermeasures for such an eventuality were meticulously recorded for use in propaganda. The Germans were to be made to understand that they would be defeated by the British blockade, even though Britain had made no preparations for it. Vansittart also commented on Schwerin's demand that Britain do something spectacular to impress Hitler: he had already called for the mobilization of the fleet in August 1938 and was calling for it again. "Count Schwerin is absolutely right. Our guarantees existed only on paper, and the Germans knew very well that conscription would take a long time to become effective." Vansittart quoted Field Marshal Mannerheim, who "considered war completely unavoidable." Mussolini also considered war inevitable if Poland did not give in on Danzig. Vansittart demanded that all material from the German conspiracy circle be used and was pleased that the Foreign Office was doing its best to this end. (FO 371/22974, C 9818, July 10, 1939, signed Vansittart.)

Kordt warns against a "peace conference" with Hitler.

At that time, rumors had been spread by Dr. Erich Kordt that Hitler wanted to convene a "peace conference." Roberts writes: "That's the bait they've been dangling in front of us for months." Halifax notes in his handwriting that he would inform Chamberlain of this that same evening. Kirkpatrick did not believe that Hitler would propose a peace conference, and Vansittart immediately ruled out such a possibility, saying:

"I hope we will never be so foolish as to accept such a limited conference as Hitler proposes.... I trust that the French will not allow themselves to be beguiled in this way again. The Germans will bring in their allies, Italy and Japan. The United States will be unable to help us here. They are far too timid (mousy). Should a conference ever take place, we must have our allies present, at least Poland and Turkey. And once and for all, this senseless and impossible game must be brought to an end, which only benefits Germany in its attempt to eliminate Russia in Europe. For us English, Russia is in every respect a much less dangerous member of the international community than Germany. I trust that my views will be respected. I hold them most strongly." (FO 371/22974, C 9996, July 13, 1939, and FO 371/23022, C 9571, July 6, 1939.)

The prospect of a peace conference threw the British into a panic and prompted Vansittart to immediately denounce it as a "limited" conference that Britain must reject. With the same vehemence, he demanded that Russia not be excluded from Europe because it was less dangerous to Britain than Germany.

Ribbentrop's fall is supposed to trigger a "landslide"

With relentless, almost fanatical determination, the conspirators made Ribbentrop the target of their

smear campaign in the last weeks of peace. The character assassination had begun in the early 1930s and reached its first peak in 1938/39 in the so-called "secret reports" of the German putschists. As is well known, the "diabolical lie" about Ribbentrop's main report "A 5522," which Erich Kordt played into the hands of the American chargé d'affaires Herschel Johnson, served as an effective prelude for the circle of conspirators.

On June 22, Maurice Ingrim, head of the "Southern Department" in the Foreign Office, received news from a Dutch friend who was generally "quite well informed" that Ribbentrop's influence was growing. He was "propagating his conviction that England would not fight for Poland. He was trying to provoke Hitler into launching a 'coup' against Danzig or Upper Silesia. There were only one or two generals and Neurath who wanted to neutralize Ribbentrop's influence." (FO 371/23021, C 8959, June 22, 1939.)

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This slander against Ribbentrop was also repeated by Count Schwerin, who was on a special mission in London. The German officer told an English friend that Hitler was determined to attack Poland because "Ribbentrop constantly assured him that England would not fight." Sargent then suggested that the British naval measures for July and August be made public with the greatest possible publicity, thus following Schwerin's recommendations. (FO 22975, C 9048. Kirkpatrick, June 26, 1939.)

Eight days after Schwerin's visit to London, Count Raczynski and Norton were also informed in Warsaw of the latest advice from the German conspirators. It was again emphasized that great strength lay in the advice given to us by von Weizsäcker to maintain "un silence menagant." Raczynski immediately replied that the threatening silence demanded by the German Secretary of State also reflected the opinion of Colonel Beck, "who could not agree to a single concession because the nation would not allow it." (DBFP VI, No. 293.) Once again, British policy followed the advice of a conspirator.

In Burckhardt's conversation with Lipski, Ribbentrop was also the target of the High Commissioner's false accusations: "Ribbentrop is the great misfortune; Göring is being pushed aside by the double offensive of Ribbentrop and Goebbels, which is supported by Himmler." In his conversation with Italian Ambassador Attolico, Burckhardt gets to the heart of the matter and accuses the Poles of "megalomania, one of the greatest dangers of the moment," because they were pursuing "imperialism with very far-reaching goals." (FO 371/23021, C 8830, June 20, 1939.)

On June 29, the Egyptian ambassador visited Lord Halifax to inform him of the latest news from Germany. Food, tobacco, etc. were in very short supply there, and according to general rumors, July 20 was the most dangerous day. The ambassador's German friends hoped for the successful conclusion of an Anglo-Russian pact. Goebbels was in favor of peace but feared Ribbentrop. If mobilization were ordered and weapons distributed, "it is quite possible that the current regime will be overthrown." (Signed Halifax, June 29, 1939, FO 371/23021, C 9205.) One day earlier, Schacht had also intervened and asked his daughter, Mrs. van Scherpenberg, in London to inquire whether Germany could expect a decent peace treaty if Hitler "within one

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or two months." (FO 371/22973, C 9241, June 28, 1939, Jäckh's note.) This note was signed by Jebb

and Roberts. At the beginning of July, Ogilvie-Forbes reported from Berlin that Hewel, Ribbentrop's liaison officer to Hitler, had said that Hitler did not want war under any circumstances and would not allow himself to be provoked into it, but that he was aware that there was a war party in England and doubted whether Chamberlain would be able to resist it in order to reach an agreement with Germany that he — Hitler — still desired with all his heart. Halifax wrote in his own hand: "I will show this to the Prime Minister," and Vansittart also noted in his own hand: "I hope that Mr. Hewel's statement will not be taken into consideration; he is a completely unreliable person." (FO 22974, C 9524, July 5, 1939.)

In mid-July, Dr. Jäckh took up the subject of Count Schwerin's trips to England again and wrote to Sir Orme Sargent:

"The count was so impressed by what he saw in England that his report on Britain's readiness to fight was very positive. The figures he gave to the German authorities were twice as high as those given by Ribbentrop on British armaments. This difference in assessment is said to have led Hitler to doubt Ribbentrop's reliability, to such an extent that Ribbentrop has been sidelined for the moment. My friends confirm to me that the situation will therefore improve because German policy is showing itself more inclined toward a peaceful settlement." (FO 371/22975, C 10155, July 19, 1939, signed Jäckh.)

Roberts writes by hand that this Jäckh report shows how successful the English efforts have been in convincing Hitler of the British determination to resist. The report was also read by Jebb, Sargent, and Kirkpatrick.

It was not Ribbentrop's job, either as ambassador or as foreign minister, to find out about British armament figures. That was the job of the military attachés, above all the General Staff, to whose Foreign Armies West department Graf Schwerin belonged.

Hitler wanted nothing more than an alliance with England, and no one supported him in this more than Ribbentrop. But precisely for this reason, the conspirators increasingly pursued the foreign minister with slander of every kind. This is also evident in the following report by Colvin, who, on behalf of his German friends, advised the British to "eliminate Ribbentrop through slander, whereupon a landslide would

would bring an end to the regime." In this context, Colvin reports on his stay in Berlin from July 7 to 10, 1939, as the most important event:

The military outlook. I have heard from reliable sources that Hitler's decision to strike on August 1 has been changed. Now it is supposed to happen on August 25.... Nevertheless, a coup d'état in Danzig must be expected from July 31 onwards. The delay in the attack was caused by the Halifax speech on June 29, reports from German visitors in England about the heightened mood, Henderson's remark that Hitler was impressed by England's power, the Germans' hope for greater complications in the Far East, and further bomb attacks in Ireland. In addition, revolts and unrest had to be organized in Danzig and in former Prussian provinces... The economic situation was so tense that such preparations could not be repeated if war did not break out this year.

The political outlook. There are two Nazi versions. According to the first, Germany will occupy Danzig but take no further action this year... Both officials in the Wilhelmstraße and those in the Propaganda

Ministry are convinced that Great Britain will not start a world war if Germany incorporates the Free City into the Reich... An emissary such as Captain Wiedemann has not been in London this year. According to the second Nazi version, Germany will fight and destroy Poland in its present form. The German population and the troops are convinced of an easy victory over Poland. A departure from these plans would be a great loss of prestige for Hitler, as would the economic losses already mentioned... I have been informed of the following plan: Danzig will be taken over by proclamation or a coup. The Poles and the Western powers will be informed immediately that Poland will retain its customs privileges and that its trade will remain unimpeded. This will happen in August. Should Poland and the Western powers take military action, Hitler would tell his people that 'we must defend ourselves, we have been attacked, just as in 1914'. If Poland and the Western powers accept the changes to the Danzig Statute – which Halifax had solemnly promised on behalf of his government in November 1937 – Germany will immediately exert diplomatic pressure on small neighboring countries, the Baltic states, Holland, Belgium, Denmark, and the Balkans. At the same time, manipulated revolts would break out in Polish territory, giving Germany the opportunity to intervene. Then the attack on Poland would follow...

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From the Colvin Report of July 17, 1939, document FO 371/22975, C 10057

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The attitude toward Great Britain. Even those who believe in Great Britain still doubt England's attitude. Even Halifax's speech on June 29 did not completely convince the intelligentsia that England will fight for Danzig... Even in the German War Ministry, there are doubts about British intentions... It is incomprehensible that we sacrificed the Baltic states, because they are so necessary for what England is about to build with Soviet Russia – an alliance... Nazis boast that they can rely on Mr. Chamberlain. Chamberlain's statements that Germany could have a settlement if it wanted one are misleading the Germans into believing that he does not want a fight... The Russian negotiations made no progress because the Soviets did not trust Chamberlain. The Germans still believe they can get Danzig without a war.

Reactions to our propaganda. Both the Nazis and their opponents recognize the great progress made by our propaganda. But our main weapon, the BBC, is still too weak... In order to convince Germany of England's seriousness, new men must be brought into the cabinet who support Halifax, whom Nazi politicians already consider "isolated." Strong action to defend British interests would impress the German military, the only people who could get Europe out of the impasse without war. It is recommended that neutral powers submit a note to the German government on the Danzig problem. Finally, I was advised to base all our propaganda on the idea that a huge conspiracy against the British Empire and free Europe was being prepared by the Axis powers. This is the most successful response to the encirclement propaganda. The Germans will say, first, that this is true, and second, that we neither want to fight nor destroy the British Empire. Hitler has therefore hidden something from us. The tendencies of the Chatham House speech can be further developed on the radio. For example, about a flexible or rigid policy that could be followed by democracies and monarchies as well as dictatorships. The goal should be to convince Germany that the current policy is leading to disaster and that even the English are asking themselves: Is it possible to change German policy, which is becoming clearer every day? The Germans will undoubtedly ask themselves: Perhaps, but only through a change in the current government. If one of the most hated ministers – Goebbels, Ribbentrop or perhaps Himmler – could be eliminated by a smear campaign branding him the target of all foreign policy grievances, then perhaps the intelligent men and Göring would join forces against the dismissed man, and a landslide would soon follow." (FO 371/22975, C 10057, July 17, 1939, signed I. G. Colvin.)

Roberts wrote by hand on Colvin's report: "It proves that the British policy of absolute firmness is correct. On the other hand

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he rejects the last paragraph, which recommends slandering Ribbentrop, "because attacks from abroad usually have the opposite effect." It would be better to strongly emphasize the alleged German intentions against the Empire, "because this will also shake up our own people."

Kirkpatrick also believes that the secret plans of the Axis against the British Empire should be further exploited in English propaganda. Sargent shares this view. Another critic writes that he will highlight the "Axis conspiracy." Colvin was so important to British politicians that, as a correspondent, he was given the opportunity to add a handwritten marginal note to his own report. In it, he called for the character assassination of a German minister through further "sensational revelations."

A week later, Colvin took up the Ribbentrop issue again. In the meantime, David Astor's report on his trip to Germany had arrived, in which Trott's suggestions regarding the measures that the German conspirators expected and desired from England against the Reich government were reproduced in pages of explanations. Trott had urged Astor, on behalf of the German putschists, to insist that London demonstrate firmness toward the Reich under all circumstances. The "moderates," who included industrialists and representatives of the Ministry of Economics and the general staff, wanted to secure British support in order to position themselves behind Göring and against Ribbentrop. Colvin used this remark as a hook to repeat his proposals. Propaganda against Ribbentrop should be stepped up. This would enable the "moderate elements" in the German government to oppose the foreign minister. In this way, "a decisive break" could be brought about within the government. (Handwritten comment by I. Colvin, July 25, 1939, FO 371/22974, C 9967.)

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Polish provocations

Poland relies on England

Chamberlain's guarantee of March 31, 1939 had made the Poles considerably more confident. (See Jebb Report of June 9, 1939. FO 371/23020.) The Vatican also had "clear evidence" that "neither France nor England intended to advise Poland to give in order to negotiate with Germany. The two great Western powers have publicly declared that they are prepared to march on Poland's side." In doing so, London and Paris had "placed the decision of the casus belli... in the hands" of the Polish government. (Vatican document No. 84, p. 187.) But even so, British propaganda repeatedly tried to portray the guarantee to Poland as harmless, having nothing to do with Warsaw's hardened stance. In this vein, Norton reported from Warsaw to Sir Orme Sargent that Colonel Beck had told him, after several vodkas, that he had already realized on January 4, i.e., before his visit to Hitler, that Poland and Germany were drifting apart. (FO 371/230022, C 9625, July 11, 1939.) Their guilty conscience prompted the British to repeatedly seek new excuses for their guarantee pact, for which there is no excuse. For England did not want to protect or defend Poland with its guarantee, but only to take Germany away from its ally.

On July 14, Sir Max Muller wrote a report on his recent trip to Danzig, Warsaw, and Berlin and sent it to Sargent. Muller spoke with Burckhardt and Chodacki, the Polish general commissioner in Danzig. In line with the views of these men, who were loyal to England, he reported on the "enormous propaganda being carried out by the Germans throughout the country." Festivities were being celebrated, such as a sports week, singing events, a folk week, etc. Chauvinistic speeches were being given several times a day. This had impressed the 97% German population in Danzig. Burckhardt had broken off a conversation with Muller in order to meet with Greiser. At that time, the question of whether Burckhardt should leave Danzig as High Commissioner was under discussion, but Ribbentrop and Beck persuaded him to return to the Free City. The military preparations of the

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Poland was exceptionally large. Gdynia was full of soldiers and sailors. The streets were mined and

blocked. The Poles were calm but determined to occupy Danzig if the Senate declared the Free City's return to the Reich. The Poles should not doubt that England was determined to help them. From the few Germans Muller met, who were very pessimistic, he heard that German military preparations were only a consequence of Poland's military measures in Gdynia and the area around Danzig. Had Hitler not exercised such restraint, war would have broken out long ago, was the general opinion. Hitler did not consider Danzig worth starting a world war over, but believed that the Danzig question would have to be resolved one day.

Lipski's attitude in the last months before the war is important. He told Muller that since the "March crisis," when, as is well known, the conspirators at home and abroad were spreading rumors of an imminent coup against Danzig and Poland, he had not seen any of his former "Nazi friends" and that even Göring was keeping his distance from him. In reality, Lipski had received explicit instructions from Beck not to speak to any Germans, especially not Ribbentrop. This is expressly confirmed by Henderson, to whom Lipski had admitted this. Lipski's isolation was therefore desired by the Polish government, but not by the German government. Muller writes about this: "In any case, the British and the Poles do not seem to have the slightest contact with influential Germans, i.e., with Nazi leaders." This sentence had to be omitted from the transcripts of the Muller document that went to Norton in Warsaw and Henderson in Berlin. (FO 371/23022, C 10009, July 14, 1939, signed Max Muller.) Kirkpatrick read the Muller report, and Halifax demanded that Chamberlain read it, probably because it "expressed the steadfastness and calm of the Poles, while Berlin was provoking Warsaw."

On July 16 and 17, 1939, Ashton-Gwatkin spoke with Dr. Schacht. Their topic was again what would happen if Germany invaded Danzig, even though Hitler had never considered this possibility. Ashton-Gwatkin wanted to know what would happen if, after such an imaginary action, Hitler offered general peace terms that would undoubtedly cause the British government great embarrassment. Ashton-Gwatkin believed that the Poles would fight immediately and that this would mean general war. Schacht was very agitated about

This was his response, and he asked England not to start bombing. It would be better to seize German ships, "then something would happen within Germany, but not after the bombing started." Schacht was alluding to the coup in the Reich and the overthrow of Hitler, which would remove all difficulties for England. (FO 371/22975, C 10484, July 17, 1939.) Roberts comments on this in handwriting: "Unfortunately, Dr. Schacht's alternative will not help the Poles during the first days of the war, because they will then be exposed to the main blow of the German attack. They will lose all courage if our help does not become more active. They will actually force us into a 'Tannenberg solution' (decisive battle) while they fight their 'Battle of the Marne' (delaying battle). Kirkpatrick also adds in handwriting: "Dr. Schacht's view is absurd. If we were to follow him—i.e., not bomb Germany—Hitler would get away with it and his position in Germany would be strengthened, not weakened." Lo(ndonderry) and Halifax also distrusted Dr. Schacht, and Ashton-Gwatkin added to his own report:

"I do not believe that Dr. Schacht was honest... . In view of the consequences of war, he is asking us to hold back, and his appeal to us seems to reflect his conviction that Germany will be defeated in the war. And a Germany defeated in war will be so broken that there is nothing in the world that could put it back together again."

Cadogan also rejects Schacht's advice that England should not begin the bombing. He writes to the British commander-in-chief, General Viscount Gort, at the War Office: "Are we to cease displaying our

strength simply because a traveling preacher advises us to do so?" Schwerin had repeatedly stated that "England must demonstrate its strength in order to impress Germany." Gort pointed out that this had been widely reported in the British newspapers over the last few days. It would therefore be dangerous if the German General Staff were to imagine that the English authorities had been influenced by "primitive and obvious propaganda." (FO 371/22991, C 11448, July 27, 1939.)

A. Hollmann, First Secretary at the British Embassy in Berlin, wrote to Kirkpatrick on July 26:

"A retired German officer with good connections to the War Ministry overheard a conversation between General Sperrle and a mutual acquaintance of Hitler. According to this, Hitler did not want

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war, but a compromise on the Danzig question. The German officer who had been dismissed had urged England to remain firm without risking a compromise. For Hitler would one day have to capitulate for financial and economic reasons. The German officer knew from a comrade who had been employed in the technical department of the Westwall that the fortifications were far from impregnable. The work would not be completed for another two or three years. Everything had been hastily built from a wide variety of materials and would not withstand bombing. The tank barriers were not strong enough. The mood in the army was poor because the officers who did not wholeheartedly support the government were afraid of being denounced by Nazi enthusiasts. This was less the case in Bavaria, where the regime was openly criticized. Halder was extremely capable and currently opposed to the war. A large part of the general staff recommended an alliance with Russia at any price. The Italian propaganda minister Alfieri had received instructions from Mussolini to make it clear to the Germans that Italy would not fight for Germany. Adolf Hitler Square would not be renamed Mussolini Square. (FO 371/22975, C 10764, July 28, 1939.)

Hollmann added to his own report that his German friend expected the collapse of the National Socialist regime without a war, i.e., through a coup that the whole world was expecting. In England, people reassured themselves that the blockade would break the resistance in Germany. The Siegfried Line was weak, and after a personal inspection, Hitler had "some engineers shot." Todt had fallen into disgrace. The coming coup could only be prepared by the army together with the civilian population. "Since it seems impossible to defeat the German army in the field, our propaganda should strive to induce the army to eliminate the regime without war. It was believed that the army was pressuring Hitler to conclude a treaty with Russia. Then the situation for England would be unenviable. It would be even worse if, after Hitler's removal, the German army were to conclude an alliance with the Russians. Then England would face a military dictatorship, i.e., a Bolshevik bloc stretching from Vladivostok to Cologne. Therefore, British propaganda should strive for the restoration of the monarchy in Germany, which the majority of Germans would accept." (FO 371/23010, signed R. T. Smallbones.)

In a handwritten memorandum, Henderson had addressed Halifax at the beginning of July 1939 with great passion

argued against a fixed Anglo-Soviet pact, because this would reveal the total "encirclement of

Germany" too openly before England was even better prepared than it was now. He demanded that the so-called "peace front," which was also supposed to include Russia, be dissolved again. Instead, England should seek a way in direct negotiations with Germany that would make it possible to resolve all outstanding issues amicably. Because Hitler wanted above all to "avoid war with England, the problems of the corridor and Danzig should be addressed and a political armistice of six months or a year" concluded. (DBFP VI, p. 711ff.) In England, however, neither Henderson's desire for peace nor Hitler's offer to postpone the solution of the Danzig question was accepted. On July 17, Henderson once again personally advocated the return of Danzig to the Reich and urgently recommended that England should confine itself to the "threatening silence" demanded by von Weizsäcker. "All public warnings, all senseless propaganda, and all pinpricks and press polemics must be refrained from!" Since Hitler himself desired a peaceful solution to the Danzig question, it was "really not difficult" to achieve it, for Danzig was German and would by no means be taken away from the Poles. Henderson demanded that Halifax ensure press silence, a "truce of words," and an end to propaganda against the German head of state, which was only intended to "humiliate" Hitler. Then he would be willing to speak openly with Hitler and Ribbentrop in order to find a peaceful solution together with them. But the unfortunate ambassador never received this permission.

Henderson could do no more than fight against the falsehoods that were being spread in secret reports about Germany in England. He rejected Chodacki's talk of "continuous German provocations," i.e., the military preparations in Danzig, and asked whether the Polish preparations, e.g., "the guns on Hela," were not also provocations. Both sides feared a coup d'état in the Free City and were therefore making their preparations. Even Sir Max Muller, who was a friend of Poland, warned Warsaw against taking hasty steps. Henderson himself claimed to have more sympathy for the Poles because they were the weaker side. While Germany was always a "threat," Poland would only be a threat as an ally! Henderson feared that Colonel Beck could play Hitler's game, just as Schuschnigg and Benesch had done. But this time, England would be drawn into it. "The

Germans are devils, but the Poles are no angels. That is the reason for all his warnings." (FO 371/23024, C 10934, August 2, 1939. Henderson to Sargent.)

General Ironside in Warsaw

On July 19, General Ironside was in Warsaw and held decisive talks with Polish Secretary of State Count Szembek. However, he did not speak in accordance with Henderson's wishes, who had wanted to warn the Poles against further intransigence toward Germany, but instead declared "in a very categorical tone that Chamberlain would not repeat the mistakes of Munich" and would finally take action against Germany. He left no doubt that "Danzig is nothing but a pretext for future conflict," i.e., merely the reason for the British preventive war against Germany, which Henderson so desperately opposed. Ironside promised Warsaw Britain's full "political" support in return for the British loan that had been promised, the terms of which "insulted Polish pride." (Szembek Journal, Paris 1052, p. 484f.)

Ironside himself reported the following as the most important points to Halifax in person: Marshal Rydz-Smigly and Colonel Beck, who dislike each other, held power in Poland in their hands. Beck had told him that he wanted to discuss the Danzig question with the Germans, but that it could not be dealt with in isolation. Marshal Rydz-Smigly was more open and stated that he would not discuss Danzig with the Germans. "The Germans wanted the destruction of Poland or its power because Poland was currently hindering German expansion plans to the east. Danzig was undoubtedly a German city, but it

could not exist without the Polish hinterland. If Danzig were to be annexed to the Reich, 90% of its inhabitants would be ruined... Ironside did not consider the Marshal to be "a great strategist," but he had at least led troops in war... Many generals had war experience against the Bolsheviks from 1920. One could say "that the whole nation was determined to fight." Poland, however, would not allow itself to be branded an aggressor and would keep England informed of all new developments. (FO 371/23024, C 10949, July 28, 1939.) The Ironside report clearly shows that the Poles had no idea what they would do in the event of a conflict. They, too, were simply waiting for the coup.

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Hitler wants to postpone the resolution of the Danzig question, and the Poles are looking for a reason to go to war.

On the same day, July 19, 1939, when Ironside was in Warsaw, Hitler sent Gauleiter Forster on an official mission to the High Commissioner of Danzig to propose, through his mediation, that Poland postpone the resolution of the Danzig problem for years. Hitler had decided to take this step because of the deterioration in German-Polish relations since the British-Polish Guarantee Pact. The final impetus was the insinuation that Germany was planning a coup against Danzig.

The so-called "note war" over the increased number of Polish customs inspectors in the Free City eventually led to the "margarine and herring war" between Danzig and Poland. The city was threatened with economic ruin due to the obstruction of exports of these perishable goods. Finally, on July 19, 1939, the official representative of Poland in Danzig, Chodacki, announced a complete ban on the export of Danzig fats to Poland as of August 1. This provocation was the result of England's promise to support Poland in its defiance against Germany. Again, as on May 21, 1938, Halifax called Hitler's mediation proposal, which he had officially presented to the High Commissioner of Danzig through Gauleiter Forster, a "veiled retreat" and the "first success of the firm stance" of England and France. But he warned that the Poles should not "provocatively assert that the German government had become weak." (DBFP VI, No. 386.) For then Germany could have declared, in its defense, that it had been humiliated by Poland and thus forced to act.

Halifax instructed the British Consul General in Danzig, Shepherd, and the Embassy Councilor Norton in Warsaw to find out everything that had been leaked in Poland from Burckhardt's report on Hitler's offer to postpone the Danzig question. Although the Polish government had been informed that, in Hitler's opinion, the solution to the Danzig question could wait "until next year or even longer if necessary," it was concealed that Burckhardt had expected a positive response from Warsaw to the German offer. Above all, Warsaw was kept in the dark about the important fact that the offer was conditional on

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The postponement of the Danzig question was the result of Hitler's personal initiative, which Forster merely had to convey.

Remarkably, immediately after Hitler's offer to postpone the resolution of the Danzig question, an

incident occurred on July 20 at the Danzig-Polish border, in which a Polish customs officer was shot dead by a Danzig SA man "on Polish territory." The Danzig press denied that the German men had been on Polish territory. Nevertheless, the Danzig Senate officially expressed its regret over the "accident," as the Poles themselves called this tragic event. (DBFP VI, No. 364 and No. 390.) At that time, there was an agreement that Polish military transports through the Danzig area had to be announced in advance, but this was not always observed. Burckhardt therefore spoke with Chodacki, who promised him that in future all military transports would be duly announced in advance. While this conversation was still going on, Chodacki received a telephone call informing him of the shooting of the Polish customs officer. Chodacki immediately declared: "That's the end, it means war!" He refused to continue his discussion with Burckhardt and turned an accident into a casus belli. To exacerbate the situation, he withdrew his promised concession regarding advance notification of transport trains passing through the Danzig area.

The German Consul General von Janson – "Weizsäcker's confidant" (Burckhardt) – did not report this matter to the Foreign Office in Berlin until 14 days later, on August 4, 1939, in a telephone message. This was the order that Gauleiter Forster had received from Hitler to "ensure détente and pacification in the Danzig question." When Burckhardt was asked again two days later by Forster to "take official action in the so-called customs inspector conflict," he went to Chodacki, who "received him very unfriendly—probably because of Burckhardt's opinion on the customs inspector issue, which essentially blamed the Poles" (DBFP VI, Shepherd Report). Without being authorized to do so by the German government, the High Commissioner warned the Polish representative of the Free City "that Danzig would take countermeasures if the Polish government did not yield on the customs inspector issue.... i.e., that under certain circumstances the Danzig border with East Prussia would be opened." Chodacki replied: "That means war for Poland." (ADAP VI, Doc. 771.) The British telegraphed this to

Consul General Shepherd to London on the evening of August 4, adding that Burckhardt should inform Senate President Greiser, in view of the threat to open the border to East Prussia, that "such an action would constitute a casus belli for Poland." (DBFP VI, No. 543.) A strange situation! Within 14 days, Chodacki had twice threatened casus belli for different reasons, while the official German government had not mentioned the opening of the border to East Prussia with a single word, as Burckhardt's memoirs show. There is only one explanation for this: Chodacki had returned from Warsaw on August 4 and must have received instructions from Beck to make the opening of the border to East Prussia, which Burckhardt had already suggested as a possibility on July 20, a cause for war instead of the unexplained shooting of the Polish customs officer.

Schacht: "Only through war can Hitler be eliminated."

At the beginning of August 1939, Dr. Schacht again contacted the British government through the banker Warburg. He informed London that

"he was convinced that Hitler would soon plunge into war. Schacht did not seem particularly concerned about the idea of war and claimed that 14 days after the outbreak of war, opposition to the current regime would consolidate and bring about its rapid downfall. The German economy could sustain itself in peacetime through inflation, etc., but the demands of war would lead to its rapid collapse. The war would not begin because of Danzig, but because of Germany's known intention to destroy Poland or Romania. Hitler was determined to follow this course, and the only alternative was war or surrender. Mr. Warburg concluded by saying that Dr. Schacht would spend five weeks in Germany to establish

contact with his friends in the civil service and the army. (FO 371/22976, C 11329, signed Kirkpatrick. August 3, 1939, report on Schacht-Warburg.)

Schacht also had other friends of the British government spread the false claim that Hitler wanted to destroy not only Poland but also Romania. On August 5, a certain Hermann Kantorowicz sent copies of documents written by Stinnes to the Foreign Office. Kantorowicz was instructed to forward the important Stinnes papers, but not to mention the name "Stinnes." Everything that Stinnes wrote in the fol-

The author of the following article was informed of this by "Schacht himself."

"Hitler's war plans: Hitler is currently preoccupied almost exclusively with foreign policy and with the so-called 'total war'... Hitler's goal is clear: to act in the East at the first opportunity... in order to achieve domination over Europe and the destruction of the 'degenerate' British Empire. Today, Hitler and his associates consider England to be a secondary power that no longer even wants to fight for its existence... Since Hitler dismissed his outstanding generals with independent judgment, such as Beck, von Fritsch, and others, the Reichswehr and its leading generals are prepared to carry out Hitler's orders as long as he is successful—despite their personal doubts about the ultimate outcome of the war. In the event of a failure of the hoped-for lightning victory—but not before—the General Staff will probably take matters into its own hands and act independently of Hitler.

Hitler's difficulties:

Hitler's difficulties: a) Economy: Experts have determined that in the event of a war with Poland, Germany's economic resources will be exhausted within six months, while in the event of a war against England, France, and Poland, they will barely last three months. In this context, it is clear that restricting German exports, even in peacetime, would shorten the period of Germany's resistance in any future war... There is a shortage of gasoline and rubber... Copper and coal are scarce due to exports to Italy and Spain. Food is insufficient... Financial difficulties are increasing. The entire German financial system suffers from over-organization. It may sound like a joke that chickens were actually killed by the Gestapo to determine whether they had been fed correctly. b) Opposition to the Hitler regime: 1. The Czechs. 2. The workers in Austria. 3. The miners in the Ruhr and the Sudetenland. 4. The majority of German industrialists and capitalists. They originally supported Hitler, but today they fear the growing communist tendencies of the Hitler regime.

Summary: 1. Not only a large part of the German people, but even high Nazi leaders and cabinet ministers now realize that a peaceful settlement of the European question cannot be achieved with Hitler's ever-increasing desire for domination... . As German patriots, they would rather sacrifice Hitler than endanger the future of the entire people... The policy of the democracies—the Munich Agreement and the abandonment of Czechoslovakia—has given the impression of weakness and confirmed Ribbentrop's prediction that after three months all the trouble over Czechoslovakia would be forgotten.

2. Despite the serious economic difficulties and the continuing disintegration, it would be a mistake to assume that the system will collapse without external difficulties or a war... Under

Among the leaders and the people, the view is widespread that they cannot get rid of Hitler without a war. The generals and economic experts are convinced that within a few weeks, the war would come to an end due to a lack of raw materials, especially oil. In the event of a collapse, the generals of the old school and the moderate group of Nazi leaders are ready and able to take over the government and exclude Hitler, as well as Ribbentrop, Himmler, and Goebbels...

5. The encirclement by the anti-aggression front has deeply impressed the German people and warned them against Hitler's foreign policy... The British propaganda's denial of the encirclement did not have the expected success. The German people consider the democracies weak and fear that Hitler will again be successful in his aggressive policy... However, should war break out and Hitler's lightning victory fail, he could be removed because in wartime the country would be in the hands of the military. (FO 371/22975, C 11073, August 5, 1939.)

Here, the old lie that Erich Kordt had falsely inserted into Ribbentrop's report "A 5522" comes to the fore again, namely that England had been described by Ribbentrop as "degenerate" and no longer even willing to fight for its own existence. The purpose of these repetitions was that the British government could exploit them again and again for its propaganda.

This Schacht-Stinnes memo was sent to Sir S. Gaselee with the note "Urgent." It advised the British not to try to resolve Germany's economic difficulties, but also not to believe that the German government would collapse without a war, because without a war, the army would not be able to get rid of Hitler. A few days later, Schacht contacted Weizsäcker to "report his upcoming trip to Central and South America," adding that "it was a purely private trip." (ADAP VI, note 2 to Doc. 103, in Weizsäcker's handwriting.) Weizsäcker noted, "RAM's view: Poland is not a military problem, measures have been taken to the limit, Western powers are abandoning Poland. Concerns about Poland's credit abroad. Rejection of negotiations. Have a good trip, convince them of the good cause. There is a lot at stake." There is no doubt that Schacht was supposed to "convince" the German mission chiefs in Central and South America of the impending coup by the conspirators. At the same time, Weizsäcker insinuated that the Reich Foreign Minister did not want negotiations with Warsaw.

On August 2, Halifax found it difficult to give a clear answer in the cabinet to the question "whether England was obliged to fight for Danzig." Finally, the following statement was adopted:

"Danzig itself should not be regarded as a casus belli. However, if Danzig became a threat to Polish independence, England would not remain neutral under any circumstances." Churchill explained to Halifax "that he did not want to be more Polish than the Poles, but that the British government should not exert any pressure on the Polish government to take any action which, in its opinion, would destroy its state." (FO 371/23024, C 1095, August 2, 1939.) This statement by Churchill was expressly included in the "Cabinet Declaration" to serve as an alibi for England's innocence in the outbreak of the German-Polish conflict.

Henderson attempts to smooth the waters

Regarding Hitler's voluntary retreat on the Danzig question on July 19, 1939, Henderson wrote in a private letter to Halifax on July 24 that Hitler, "despite all the rumors, is doing nothing at the moment but wait." There were some older German generals who wanted to fight if they were "finally convinced of the inevitability of British intentions to wage a preventive war." Hitler would make his own

decision, but the influence that counted most with him "was not Ribbentrop, but the military." (DBFP VI, p. 714.) In a second letter of the same day, he emphasized that Hitler, despite "a whole series of Polish provocations, had not reacted or at least had done nothing" and that in Germany "the mobilization was actually less unusual than in France and Poland." (DBFP VI, p. 715.) On July 25, he asked Halifax to make the following points clear to the Polish ambassador in London, Count Raczynski, and to pass them on to his government in Warsaw: 1. Hitler was the "best-disposed German" toward Poland. 2. The "Polish idea was completely unrealistic that, even if Poland were initially overrun in a war, its allies would ultimately prevail, resulting in an even larger Poland."

On July 28, Henderson again urged that a modus vivendi be found between Danzig, Poland, and Germany, because the current anomalous situation could not be prolonged indefinitely. The return of Danzig to East Prussia in a form that left Poland's economic and strategic rights untouched would "immensely strengthen" Poland. He wanted

"pledge all his money" that Hitler did not want war. Halifax wrote a reply to Henderson on the same day, which, contrary to his usual practice, did not contain a salutation and was signed only "Halifax." In this letter, the ambassador was reprimanded for his "misjudgment" of Poland. The situation was viewed differently in London. Above all, Henderson should never forget the advice that England must always "maintain its threatening silence—a phrase used by Mr. von Weizsäcker to Mr. Burckhardt." (DBFP VI, No. 481.) He – Halifax – did not believe in "Polish provocations," but expected "further acts of violence" from Germany. Thus, Hitler's voluntary offer of withdrawal in the Danzig question only resulted in the British government issuing instructions to its mission chiefs that were even more hostile toward Germany.

In his self-assured reply of August 1, 1939, Henderson, despite the rebuke he had received, did not depart from his conviction that the English "preventive war" against Germany, "which the people do not want," was reprehensible. He again pointed to Poland's stubborn attitude as a consequence of the British guarantee, as well as to the Polish "unpleasant persecutions and provocations." The ambassador proudly rejects the suspicion that he could leak even the slightest bit about the real British intentions to the Germans. That is why, he says, he had become "silent" throughout the summer of 1938, without anyone in Germany believing his untrue assertions. Even in 1939, he said, he did not tell them "what he wrote to Halifax about the Poles." How wrong Weizsäcker was in his memoirs when he believed that Henderson had forgotten his "affiliation" to his country of birth, just as he claimed for himself and Attolico. (Weizsäcker, Memoirs, p. 181.)

In order to ease tensions, Henderson argued on August 1, 1939, that Chamberlain should rely more on the British people, who rejected war, than on the so-called "intelligentsia," who were only pursuing their own obscure goals. He claimed to know the country on this side of the Rhine and the man who led it better than the British on the other side of the river could, and urged once again that serious talks be held with the Poles, because Colonel Beck was no longer master in his own country. Henderson understood above all that, as a result of the British attitude, many Germans believed that Eng-

land, come what may, would one day fight Germany, as Ribbentrop had already warned Hitler on January 2, 1938. The ambassador again implored Halifax to facilitate Hitler's retreat on the Danzig question, rather than presenting it as a weak concession on Germany's part.

In this letter, Henderson explains why he is writing so many "personal letters" to Halifax, which, unlike official correspondence, did not need to be submitted to the cabinet or the crown: He could only report to Halifax privately on the legality of Germany's wishes and the ongoing Polish provocations so as not to "embarrass him" with the truths he was sharing. (DBFPVI, p. 718f.)

Polish ultimatum to Danzig on August 5, 1939

The Poles were, of course, also aware of the Halifax statement of July 28, according to which England did not admit to any "unpleasant persecutions and disturbances" by Poland, but did expect "further acts of violence" on Hitler's part. On August 4, 1939, Germany was already accused of a new "act of violence" based on an utterly absurd "misunderstanding" on the part of Chodacki. But this misunderstanding, caused by the Polish representative in Danzig himself as a result of a "mix-up of names," was the reason for a short-term Polish ultimatum to the Danzig Senate the next day.

Shepherd justified the provocative Polish ultimatum with a statement by Perkowski, deputy to the plenipotentiary Chodacki. According to this statement, this "last action" was intended to test how much the Germans would tolerate and whether the Allies would stand firmly by Poland, whatever it did. This method is very reminiscent of May 2, 1938. At that time, the Czechs called the joint Anglo-French action against the Reich government a "test of strength" to see how far they could push their provocations against Germany. The tests were carried out in Munich in 1938 and in Prague in 1939 against Czechoslovakia, which was abandoned by its allies. Polish Foreign Minister Beck did not want to find himself in the same situation. He therefore attempted to use the ultimatum to determine whether his allies would stand by him, come what may. The short-term Polish ultimatum of August 4, 1939, and Hitler's subsequent concession

was published not only in the British press, but also worldwide: "Danzig and National Socialism had yielded across the board under the pressure of threatened Polish reprisals. The Polish note addressed to the Danzig Senate on August 4 had a decisive influence on the further development of the situation and on the attitude of the German Reich Chancellor.'" Burckhardt, who in August had recommended keeping Hitler's offer to postpone the Danzig question secret because of Poland's "recklessness," writes further about the Poles' motives for provoking Germany: "They intended to achieve a dangerous success, and they did not cease to emphasize this success." (Burckhardt, pp. 330 and 347.)

Only an "incident" can trigger the war

On August 7, 1939, Henderson wrote to Cadogan about his current relationship with Weizsäcker. For three months, the German state secretary had been repeating that the "only real danger would be an incident." Although Weizsäcker was not one of the main advisors, his position meant that he knew pretty much what was going on. Henderson continued:

"Personally, as a result of his experiences last August and September, I have more confidence in him than in anyone else. He may remain silent when there is something to say, but I do not believe that he would deliberately mislead me if he himself expected disturbances. That is why I am very concerned about this irritating dispute in Danzig over customs officials on the one hand and butter and herring on the other. The Secretary of State believes that I am misjudging the Poles, but I am deeply afraid of them as allies. The Belgian ambassador, who was previously envoy in Warsaw, said to me: 'You, as an

Englishman, cannot possibly appreciate what barbarians the Poles are. I fear that the English slogan is that the Poles can do no wrong and the Germans can do no right...' I wish His Majesty's Government would tell the Poles very clearly that they must end their economic pressure on Danzig, provided that the Senate is prepared to give the Polish customs officials no further trouble... I find it hard to believe that Hitler will risk a general war... I cannot see why reasonable advice to the Poles would prejudice our firm stance. If we want to restrain the Germans, we must prove that we are also prepared to bring the Poles to their senses.

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In summary, the situation is as follows: Hitler is waiting to see how events unfold and is making preparations for all eventualities, just as he did last year. Militarily, he will be at his strongest at the end of August. He must be strong both to act and to retreat. In either case, he cannot afford to show weakness. If he wants war, he must see it through to the end. If he wants to retreat before it is too late, I have the most urgent request to make of you: use all your influence on the press and on Parliament to take the right course and not to rejoice over another Pyrrhic victory like the one in May last year." (FO 800/294, August 7, 1939.)

During those days, Henderson spoke with Weizsäcker almost daily and on August 9 wanted to know from him how Hitler's interview with the English newspaper magnate Lord Kemsley had gone, as he himself had not been informed about this visit either before or after it took place. After his conversation with the State Secretary, Henderson reported to London:

"The German public is becoming increasingly convinced that England is determined to go to war with Germany and that war is therefore inevitable." Henderson had been expressing Ribbentrop's view since January 1938 for months, and "he considered the German belief that England would fight in any case to be a greater danger than the assumption that England would not fight for Danzig. The latter, however, was merely propaganda and was not shared by the leading circles in Germany. If war comes, it will come because Hitler is convinced that it is inevitable and that he would therefore rather choose this moment in the year than wait until we ourselves seize the opportunity later. That is how I see the situation today. During the upcoming talks between the British ministers during the holidays, this should always be kept in mind: We do not want war, but we are prepared to meet force with force. My barometer is the Italian ambassador. He is concerned because he, too, is not informed about Hitler's thoughts." (FO 800/294, August 9, 1939, Henderson to Cadogan.)

After Chodacki's ultimatum to Danzig, Hitler intervened directly in the dispute between Poland and the Senate of the Free City for the first time. A German note was delivered to the Polish Embassy in Berlin, concluding that if Poland maintained its measures "to prevent the import of certain goods from the Free City of Danzig to Poland," Danzig would have no choice "but to look for other export and thus also import possibilities." (Files VII, Doc. 5.) The following day, August 10, the Polish government responded negatively to the German government's verbal note and declared that it would oppose all attempts by Danzig to violate Polish rights in that city.

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by any means it deems appropriate, and that "it will regard any intervention by the Reich government to the detriment of these rights and interests as an act of aggression." (ADAP VII.)

After Hitler had unsuccessfully asked Forster to request the High Commissioner to mediate between

Poland and the Danzig Senate, he finally decided to invite Burckhardt to a meeting at Obersalzberg. Burckhardt's impending trip caused considerable excitement in London (Halifax), Warsaw (Kennard), and Danzig (Shepherd). Burckhardt himself was not much better off, and he immediately asked Halifax what he should "say to Hitler about Danzig and other matters... and whether he should inform Poland of the proposed visit." (DBFP VI, No. 601.) On the same day, he received

he received Halifax's reply that he should inform Colonel Beck of his trip and also tell Hitler. At the same time, Halifax sent him "material" to use in his conversation with the chancellor. Three weeks after Hitler's offer to postpone the Danzig question for years, this material turned the truth on its head and accused Germany of "seeking to force a decision in Danzig," while Poland "remained moderate." (DBFP VI, No. 604.)

On August 10, 1939, when Halifax had his first instructions for close British-Polish cooperation conveyed to Colonel Beck, he received from Raczynski the "mutual defensive agreement between Great Britain and Poland" newly drafted by the Polish government. However, this supposedly Polish August draft (DBFP VI, No. 613) refers to an earlier English draft dated June 24, 1939, which is not printed in the British documents, so that the difference between the two documents cannot be verified.

The Anglo-Polish defensive pact included a secret protocol that was not published until after the war. Point 1 of the secret protocol shows that the Anglo-Polish pact was directed exclusively against the Reich, since the "definition" states that "by European power, Germany must always be understood." Point 2 shows that England and Poland intended to deal with "hypothetical cases" which they could interpret as a "threatening action" by Germany whenever they wanted. Point 3 shows that England and Poland would determine independently and alone when Germany was threatening "Poland's rights in Danzig," which would entitle Poland to

would use armed force against the Free City without being considered the aggressor. Point 4, which refers to points 1 and 2, shows once again that the actions of states other than Germany would not automatically trigger the Anglo-Polish alliance pact, but that a special agreement between the two treaty partners on the measures to be taken was envisaged for this purpose. This decisive fact, which made the so-called Anglo-Polish defensive pact a pact of aggression aimed at encircling Germany, was only announced in the House of Commons after the Russian invasion of Poland in October 1939 by the then Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, R. A. Butler. However, England did not declare war on Russia, which it would have been obliged to do without the Germany clause. The so-called "Polish draft" of the Secret Additional Agreement, which appears more British than Polish, was probably based on the British draft of June 24, 1939. A directive dated August 12 to Kennard in Warsaw indicates that the construction of the so-called "hypothetical cases" did not originate with Beck, but with Halifax. Had it been the other way around, Raczynski would not have been able to say about these "hypothetical cases" that "he personally trusted that Mr. Beck shared this view and would conduct his policy accordingly." (DBFP VI, No. 613; Freund IH, Doc. 6.)

Hitler seeks a peaceful settlement for Danzig

Burckhardt with Hitler on August 12, 1939

According to Burckhardt himself, the entire Western world had feared the meeting between Ribbentrop and Colonel Beck in January 1939, as it was believed that this could lead to an agreement between Germany and Poland. England was now equally dismayed by Burckhardt's impending visit to Hitler. Halifax had been informed by Shepherd that the High Commissioner was suspicious of Colonel Beck and "Polish intentions, which he considers unduly belligerent." (DBFP VI, No. 622.) Shepherd apparently feared that Burckhardt would "place the blame for the tense situation in Danzig exclusively on the Poles" in his conversation with Hitler, and wanted the High Commissioner to be made clear once again before his trip what he was allowed to say at Obersalzberg and what he had to keep quiet about.

At the same time, Henderson telegraphed from Berlin the latest news he had learned about Burckhardt's trip. According to this, Burckhardt's visit was "Hitler's last attempt to achieve a solution to the Danzig question through diplomatic negotiations. He would not raise the demand for the corridor, but would concentrate solely on Danzig ... He will issue a government statement or present his demands in Tannenberg on August 27." (DBFP VI, No. 631.) Henderson hoped, however, that the High Commissioner would be able to "checkmate" any demands for Danzig or changes to the status of the Free City, which Hitler wanted to postpone for years. This thwarted the British government's explicit agreement, given by Halifax in November 1937, to a peaceful modification of the status quo in Danzig as well.

Strangely enough, there is no German record of the Hitler-Burckhardt conversation. Even more strange is that Burckhardt's own report on it was "edited" by the Englishman Makins and the Frenchman Arnal. (Burckhardt, p. 348.) Even if it is no longer possible to determine what Hitler really said to Burckhardt, it is clear from his censored memorandum that Hitler, despite the rejection of his Danzig

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postponement offer and, despite the triumph of the world press over Danzig's—and thus Hitler's—retreat in the face of the Polish ultimatum, once again attempted to find a "reasonable solution." Hitler explained to Burckhardt on August 12, 1939:

"If the Poles leave Danzig absolutely alone, if they do not try to outplay me with false cards, then I can wait. But one condition is that the suffering of our minorities in Poland must cease." (Burckhardt, p. 344.)

He went on to say that the extraterritorial highways he had proposed and which Warsaw had rejected, as well as the Polish roads, would not have been an obstacle. It was essential for him that East Prussia had natural connections with the Reich. (Burckhardt, p. 344f.) Two alleged statements cannot be taken from the censored Burckhardt memorandum: 1. Hitler had said on the same day that he first proposed Ribbentrop's visit to Stalin on August 12, "I must have a free hand in the East," and 2. Burckhardt had responded to Hitler's reference to the Polish ultimatum to Danzig on August 4 by saying that he had come "because of Danzig" and had "no authority to discuss other matters.".

Was the Polish ultimatum to Danzig not a matter for Danzig, for which the High Commissioner was responsible and about which he should have spoken?

In this conversation, Hitler explained that the Polish General Staff's plans were so excessive that they "far exceeded all the visions of Alexander and Napoleon." While his generals were glad that the Poles had rejected his offer of October 1938 in March 1939, for him it would have been "a solution, namely my contribution to the cause of peace."

Another point that is unclear and appears only in the English, but not in the French text of Burckhardt's report is Hitler's alleged desire to speak with "a man like Lord Halifax," namely "General Ironside." (Burckhardt, p. 346.) Ironside, of all people, whose visit to Warsaw from July 16 to 20, 1939, was regarded in Germany as the completion of the British encirclement!

Cadogan wrote about this alleged proposal by Hitler to see Ironside:

"We appreciate Mr. Hitler's desire for such a conversation, but we fear that it will be unsuccessful unless there are sufficient common interests. We do not believe that there is anything in the British attitude that is unknown to Mr. Hitler. On the one hand, it is clear that everyone

An attempt at a unilateral settlement regarding Poland would inevitably lead to war, into which our country would inevitably and immediately be drawn. On the other hand, we should be prepared at any time to establish conditions for direct talks on Danzig—which would be possible between Germany and Poland with some prospect of success—and if the dispute over Danzig could be settled, it might be possible to envisage further action on a broader front. Should Mr. Hitler believe that we could be of assistance in this direction, we would be prepared to consider any proposal he might make. It would be crucial that the utmost secrecy be maintained." (FO 371/22976, August 17, 1939, Cadogan's report.)

A unilateral settlement was never demanded, but rather negotiations on an equal footing. Chamberlain was informed that Forster in Danzig had "returned to the proposal that an Englishman should visit the Führer." As Halifax was reluctant to ignore this proposal, he suggested to Chamberlain that a message be sent to Forster along the lines mentioned above. Only the sentences within the dashes were to be omitted, as were the words "with regard to Danzig." The following should also be deleted: "In our opinion, such conditions could only be realized in the present situation if the great tension were to end." The phrase "We would be prepared to consider any proposal Hitler might make" was to be replaced by the words "Hitler will no doubt communicate his proposals to us... The Poles are certainly aware that this particular proposal by Hitler was only communicated to Makins and not to his French colleague Arnal von Burckhardt." Halifax therefore hesitated to pass this information on to the French, as Burckhardt himself had not given it to them. (FO 371/22976, August 17, 1939. Cadogan's report.)

How the British government twisted and turned to avoid the proposed talks with Hitler! It was too dangerous to ignore the offer completely, because world opinion could have interpreted this as a rejection. Cadogan therefore came up with the idea that England should offer its "support" for the upcoming German-Polish negotiations and declare its willingness to consider any proposal made by Hitler. This vague promise meant "no," as was soon to become apparent. Chamberlain took on the role of mediator only to be able to play a part, and he played his cards in such a way that a German-Polish agreement was prevented.

Three days after Burckhardt's visit to the Obersalzberg and Hitler's proposal to Stalin that Ribbentrop fly to Moscow

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, Weizsäcker held talks with Henderson. The State Secretary writes about this in his memoirs:

"On August 15, I saw British Ambassador Henderson. At the end of the conversation, I hinted at Ribbentrop's intended dispatch, which of course does not appear in my own notes on the conversation —because it was very indiscreet of me—but it does appear in Henderson's report to London:

'Weizsäcker ... stated that he believed that Russian aid to Poland would not only be completely insignificant, but that the USSR would ultimately share in the spoils of Poland.'

I hoped that this warning would not fail to have an effect in London and would prompt them to act quickly." (Weizsäcker, p. 247£.)

Three important facts emerge from Weizsäcker's statement, which reproduces Henderson's telegram to Halifax on August 16 (DBFP VI, No. 32): First, that the British government was informed of secret Reich matters by the German State Secretary. Second, that Weizsäcker's "notes" were dishonest and incomplete and would therefore have fallen under Arnim's $354 StGB - treason. Third, that the German State Secretary influenced the reporting of the British ambassador in Berlin in order to "warn" the British government of the Reich government's alleged intention to divide Poland with Russia and to "urge" England to take action against Germany.

In this conversation, Weizsäcker repeated the lie that Ribbentrop still did not believe in Britain's determination to go to war. Henderson wrote about this in a private letter to the American ambassador Hugh R. Wilson on March 6, 1940: "It seems almost unbelievable, but I nevertheless believe it to be true that Ribbentrop told his master right up to the end that England would not fight. I know this from the best of all sources, which you, between us, can guess, that he – Ribbentrop – still believed this on August 16." He continues: "I have no objection if you pass this information on to everyone, but without naming the source – Weizsäcker." (Henderson to Wilson, March 6, 1940. Wilson estate, Hoover Library, West Branch, Iowa.) Six months after the outbreak of war, Henderson was still spreading the propaganda lie that Ribbentrop did not believe in England's determination to fight in mid-August 1939, even though he had reported to Halifax shortly before that Ribbentrop was convinced that England was seeking war with Germany, which Cadogan also stated in

reported in his diary in August 1939. The propaganda theory invented by Kordt was repeated throughout the war and finally confronted Ribbentrop in Nuremberg. There, on October 13, 1945, the interrogator De Witt declared to him: "Well-informed circles tell us that you assured Hitler until the very end that the British could neither fight nor wanted to fight." According to the interrogation transcript, Ribbentrop replied "with a vehemence that transformed his calm tone of conversation into shouting: That is a hundred percent lie!" (State Department Special Interrogation Mission, Secret, p. 58.) Ribbentrop did not know and never learned that this lie originated from Erich Kordt.

Leslie Runciman at Göring's residence on August 12, 1939

At the same time that Hitler was presenting his proposed solutions to the Danzig question to High Commissioner Burckhardt at the Berghof in an attempt to find a "reasonable way out" for the Free City, Göring was receiving a British guest at Karinhall. Prince Max von Hohenlohe had arranged the meeting between Leslie Runciman and Göring. A German Luftwaffe major attended the meeting as an observer.

Göring also intervened once again as a mediator in order to find a peaceful solution to the Danzig question and bring about closer cooperation between Germany and England on all contentious issues. The young Runciman sent a record of his conversation with the head of the German Air Force to the Foreign Office:

"Göring said that Danzig was a German city and a German problem. He found it difficult to understand why England was so interested in it. England was meddling in Eastern European affairs without having any real interests there, while at the same time ignoring its humiliating position in the Far East, where it had very important interests. He would not only understand, but also appreciate our immediate intervention if we turned against the West, for example against Rotterdam. He said that the British guarantee had destroyed an agreement between Germany and Poland just when a satisfactory solution was about to be reached by both sides. He was upset about the corridor and the indignities to which German travelers between East Prussia and the rest of Germany were being subjected... While Danzig was admittedly a German city and nothing could be changed about that, the corridor was obviously a matter for discussion, but

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England was not particularly concerned. He could not understand the Poles' resistance to reaching an agreement. Danzig could not survive without trade, which was mainly Polish, and Germany was prepared to grant the Poles every reasonable concession in the free port. From a strategic point of view, Danzig was of no value to Poland because a simultaneous attack from the west, from East Prussia and from Silesia, would bring the corridor into German possession within a very short time, i.e., within 24 hours.

This was not the same problem as Bohemia and Moravia, which had been a center of hostile activity that Germany had to get rid of. He compared this problem to Ireland, where England could not allow a hostile air force or a base for enemy submarines. A Polish protectorate did not seem to be intended.

Göring said that he was not one of those who considered the British decadent. He knew very well that there were people just as brave as in Germany and that a war between them would be a long and desperate struggle on a knife edge without a real victory on either side... He excused Hitler's speech in Saarbrücken after Munich with the Prime Minister's statement in the House of Commons that we now had to rearm more strongly than ever... He had been told that the Prime Minister could not make any friendly gestures now without being thrown out. Churchill could hardly become British Prime Minister, Eden was out of the running, and he spoke so contemptuously of the name Duff Cooper that I could say nothing more.

England and Germany were the only real powers in Europe, and now both were running after the Russians. German trade with Russia was greater than ever, and the English were seeking political and military understanding. This meant playing into the hands of the Bolsheviks. In an Anglo-German war, Stalin would be the real winner. During the conversation, Göring exclaimed: 'If only I could speak

English really well, I could go over there and convince them – the English!'..." (FO 371/22976, 15 August 1939. Signed Leslie Runciman.)

Whether Göring really said all this cannot be determined. It is highly unlikely that he mentioned his poor English, as there were interpreters present. Nor would he have spoken of England's alleged decadence. But such a reference was useful for British propaganda.

After the discussion in "Karinhall," Leslie Runciman, who had been invited to Prince Max von Hohenlohe's estate, drove toward the Sudetenland. During their car trip, they had the opportunity to discuss Göring's remarks and the general political situation. Ashton-Gwatkin sent a secret report dated August 15 to the

Foreign Office. According to this report, Prince Max von Hohenlohe had told his British visitor that the situation had reached a similar peak as in the previous year, when negotiations between the Czechs and the Sudeten Germans had broken down and Hitler had threatened to use force.

Foreign Office. Prince Max von Hohenlohe then told his British visitor that the situation had reached a similar climax to that of the previous year, when negotiations between the Czechs and the Sudeten Germans had broken down. Two important dates were coming up in August 1939, the first on the 25th, when a prominent figure—probably not Hitler—would give a speech in Danzig. The next date would be during the Nuremberg Party Congress in early September. Hohenlohe had said, among other things:

"The Germans were haunted by two thoughts with regard to England: 1. That England would not fight, and 2. that it was determined to destroy Germany, for why else would it encourage the Poles to be unreasonable in Danzig, a city that did not represent any vital British interests... Göring, however, seemed to believe that England would fight. Ribbentrop, on the other hand, continued to assert that England would not fight...

The main problem for the Germans is the occupation of Danzig. The Ribbentrop school says: Strike, ignore England, it will not fight, Danzig can be secured before England has made up its mind. Göring, however, is looking for a way to obtain Danzig with England's consent. Prince Max suggested that Lord Runciman should write a letter to Göring with the utmost clarity and emphasis: a) If Germany seeks to force a unilateral solution to the Danzig question and Poland resists, England will immediately declare war on Germany. b) But that England recognized Danzig as a German city and that British public opinion would welcome a peaceful solution based on this recognition.

This letter was to be handed over by Prince Max to Field Marshal Göring, who would undoubtedly show it to Hitler. In the current situation, a private approach by a responsible figure would carry greater weight than a public statement, because it was not known how Ribbentrop would gloss an official report, or whether he would even pass it on to Hitler himself.

Runciman will, of course, report Prince Max's proposal to his father, Lord Runciman. It is probably impossible for any British cabinet minister to take any action that could be seen as satisfying German ambitions at Poland's expense. On the other hand, such a step may be the only way to prevent war. This is our terrible dilemma... An air force major who was present during Göring's interview expressed his astonishment at the field marshal's frankness and, on the way back, asked Prince Max, deeply moved, to convey to the British government that it would fight in any case if war broke out over Danzig. (FO

371/22976, August 15, 1939, signed Ashton-Gwatkin.)

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Strang writes by hand: "German policy is to intimidate the Poles and make us persuade them to give in. I hope Lord Runci-man will not write to Prince Max as suggested. Strang, August 15." Contrary to the propaganda phrases that the German leaders did not believe in England's will to fight, Cadogan also notes in his own hand: "We have evidence that Hitler and Ribbentrop know that we will fight. I consider it necessary to continue to make no statement, and again, I believe that we must be very careful at the moment not to give either our friends or our enemies any reason to believe that we might give in." (Cadogan, August 16, 1939.) Although the British government knew that Hitler and Ribbentrop were convinced of England's determination to fight, Ambassador Henderson was still forced to spread the rumor after the outbreak of war that Ribbentrop had not believed in England's intervention until the very end. He cites Weizsäcker as the source for this claim.

President Roosevelt intervenes

During these crucial days, President Roosevelt sent the following warning to the British and Polish governments:

"Public opinion in the United States and other countries considers it of the utmost importance that any military crisis should not be the result of military action by the Poles, who would have taken the first step. Ambassador Biddle in Warsaw was instructed to inform the Polish government of this decision by the US government. Herschel Johnson of the American Embassy in London had not received instructions to inform the British government of the above, and he therefore requested that the information not be circulated in the Foreign Office." (FO 371/23025, C 23025, C 11377, August 16, 1939.)

Strang notes in handwriting that the American instruction "expresses the same advice we have given to the Polish government." The document is also signed by Cadogan and Halifax. Roosevelt and Chamberlain did not want to prevent the war; they just didn't want Poland to appear as the aggressor in the eyes of the world.

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Ribbentrop anticipates British intervention

The Foreign Minister sends Dr. Hesse to Sir Horace Wilson

While Chamberlain thought of nothing else in those critical pre-war weeks but securing alibis for himself and his silent allies, fearing only that a diplomatic way out of the predicament might be found, the German leadership redoubled its efforts to avert the impending disaster through unofficial talks and direct negotiations with foreign governments.

Hitler's talks with Burckhardt and Göring's meeting with Leslie Runciman were intended to mark the

beginning of a period of détente. At the same time, talks with Italian Foreign Minister Ciano began, which Ribbentrop initiated in Salzburg on August 11 and which were continued on August 12 and 13 at Obersalzberg by Hitler in the presence of Ribbentrop. (ADAP Series D, VII, Docs. 43 and 47; note p. 29.) During these days in August, Moscow and Berlin were also in constant contact. The lines were particularly busy after August 12. The next day, the Soviet government invited the German foreign minister to come to Moscow to begin negotiations. (ADAP Series D, VII, Docs. 142 and 158.) German-Polish relations had become very tense in the meantime. The Reich government hoped that a political success in Moscow would cut the Gordian knot and persuade Poland to negotiate.

But Ribbentrop did not want to close the door on London. Even before the decision on his trip to Moscow had been made, he sent the press attaché at the German Embassy in London and head of the London branch of the German News Bureau, Dr. Fritz Hesse, to Sir Horace Wilson on August 17. Since the Reich Foreign Minister expected Britain to intervene, he wanted to make another attempt to bring about a peaceful settlement. At Hesse's insistence, Sir Horace Wilson received him on August 20 as Ribbentrop's envoy. The following day, Wilson informed the Prime Minister, Halifax, and Cadogan of the most important points of his conversation. He sent the following record of his conversation with Dr. Hesse to the Foreign Office:

"At his request, Dr. Hesse visited me this afternoon. He had returned from Germany on Thursday, where he had seen the Führer and Ribbentrop, and brought me a message from Ribbentrop. He also handed me a copy of a letter from Ribbentrop to Rothermere as a further explanation of the German point of view. I did not tell him that I already knew the letter, because Rothermere had also sent a copy to the Prime Minister.Hesse said that Hitler was aware of the reports from Wohltat and from Ambassador von Dirksen, and that the message he had brought was in accordance with the Führer's views. Ribbentrop's message had the following wording, with the corresponding explanations by Dr. Hesse:

1. Any discussion of the Polish question should not take place between England and Germany, but through direct negotiations between Germany and Poland. - Hesse explained to me that Hitler was of the opinion that a settlement of the Danzig question must be discussed between the two governments concerned, because British interests were not affected in this matter. Hitler wants and must resolve the Danzig question and will not allow anyone to prevent him from doing so. Hesse explained to me that this meant that after the Danzig question had been settled in accordance with the German proposals in March – correctly dated October 24, 1938 – further questions could be discussed. - Should provocations by Poland continue, the outcome is clear, because Hitler is under the impression that Germans are being mistreated in some parts of Poland. - Hesse told me that he himself had seen a number of confidential reports about the mistreatment of Germans by the Poles, and that he was glad that these reports had brought to light matters that inevitably made a bad impression on Hitler. -

2. After the settlement of Danzig, Hitler intends to submit proposals for a general settlement, going as far as possible to take full account of the British position. He is prepared to offer England an alliance.

3. Should this renewed offer be rejected, Hitler would regard this as proof that England did not desire an understanding with Germany, and England would then have to be regarded as Germany's enemy. This would mean a fight to the death between the two countries. Hesse said that Hitler was bitter that his efforts to bring about an Anglo-German understanding had failed. The matter was very close to his heart, but he doubted whether such an understanding was still possible. The argument that "trust must

be restored" must also apply to the German position.

These were the three points of Ribbentrop's message that Hesse was to convey. He was authorized to speak and went on to explain that his superiors had the impression that we wanted to betray them on the Danzig question and that they feared that further discussions on a broader basis could leave the Danzig question unresolved. Therefore, he said

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Hesse, they wanted to stick to the statement that, once the Danzig question had been settled, which they hope will be acceptable to us, further offers would be made on other matters. They believe that we want to remove Danzig from the agenda. Apparently, Dirksen's report did not make it clear that it is not a question of excluding Danzig, but rather an attempt to broaden the basis for discussion so that Danzig can be dealt with within other, more general questions, in the hope that developments will make the Danzig question appear less acute than if it were dealt with alone.

Hesse asked whether it would not be possible to find a formula that made it clear that Danzig would remain on the agenda, but that the Free City would be dealt with more incidentally, pari passu. It would be worth the effort to find such a formula. The right course of action would be to convince the Polish government to enter into direct negotiations with the German government. He was aware of Burckhardt's efforts and seemed to believe that they might be successful. However, this would depend on the aforementioned mistreatment of Germans by the Poles not continuing, let alone intensifying...

Hesse referred to Sir Nevile Henderson's visit to Weizsäcker at the beginning of last week and said that insofar as this visit included a repetition of the declarations about our intention to fulfill our guarantees, it was a mistake. He said that Hitler knew very well that Great Britain would be involved in the event of a war between Germany and Poland. He added that Hitler was fully aware of this, as were Ribbentrop and other leaders. Hitler had taken this fully into account in his calculations, although he still could not understand why we were taking such extreme measures over the Danzig question. They regarded the Danzig dispute as part of the revision of the Treaty of Versailles and did not consider it comparable to an attack on Romania, etc. Hesse considered it a big mistake to keep repeating our determination to fulfill our obligations. This would only irritate and anger Hitler, who was fully aware of the situation. I—Wilson—recorded this statement in writing because Hesse made it voluntarily and not as a result of my questions.

Hesse was satisfied that no date or dates had been set, at least at the time he left Germany four days ago. Hesse, who knows England well and had always said he wanted to improve relations between the two countries, said at the end of the conversation that he was at our disposal if any communications or contacts were to be made. He is a long-time supporter of Hitler and has been closely associated with him for the past 20 years ... Personally, he claimed that a settlement in Danzig – the road to East Prussia – was Hitler's last demand, as the only important correction still outstanding from Versailles. Signed H. J. W. August 20, 1939." (FO 371/22975, C 10959.)

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Joseph Henke, a senior official of the former Foreign Office, reported on this document in the "Vierteljahresheften für Zeitgeschichte" (Quarterly Journal for Contemporary History) in 1973 on page 231ff. He added: Sir Horace Wilson later sent a "copy" of this transcript to Halifax and Cadogan with the comment:

"I presented the gist of the conversation to the Prime Minister today and later to the Foreign Secretary, Lord Halifax, and Sir A. Cadogan during a conference with the Prime Minister. Signed H. J. W. (Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte. 2nd issue, April 1973, p. 238.)

It is difficult to understand why Henke does not at least mention the second conversation between Dr. Hesse and Sir Horace Wilson on September 2, in which Ribbentrop made official offers to the British government for a final settlement of the Polish dispute and declared his willingness to withdraw German troops to the border. This important protocol will be discussed in detail below.

Wilson's record of the conversation on August 20, 1939, and Hesse's report on his meeting with Chamberlain's "second self" on August 22 (Hesse, p. 195f.) provide a clear insight into the intentions and objectives of the British and German governments. While Berlin was trying to break out of the deadlock through unofficial talks in order to finally find a peaceful solution to the Danzig and Corridor problem, Wilson's statements left no doubt that London was not prepared to give in and exert a moderating influence on Poland.

Hesse spoke in London on behalf of Hitler and Ribbentrop to present the German position on a variety of political issues. The Wilson Protocol provides direct insight into the position taken by the Reich Chancellor and Reich Foreign Minister during the critical days of August 1939. It is an irony of history that it was Sir Horace Wilson—the Prime Minister's most loyal supporter and one of the most important links between the German putschists and 10 Downing Street—who drafted a key document whose entire content demolishes the long-planned smear campaign against Ribbentrop.

From the main report "A 5522" of December 1937 to the detailed instructions to Hesse in August 1939, Ribbentrop's assessment of British policy toward Germany remained consistent. In "A 5522," he warned that with the British

readiness for war. "England will fight!" And almost two years later, Ribbentrop had his colleague Hesse inform Chamberlain's chief advisor: "Hitler knows full well that Great Britain will join in if war breaks out between Germany and Poland... Hitler is convinced of England's decision, as are he (Ribbentrop) and other leaders. Hitler had taken this fully into account in his calculations." Hesse, who had three detailed conversations with Ribbentrop in July and August 1939, also attests to the fact that Ribbentrop did not have an easy time convincing Hitler of Britain's determination to fight and that he was only able to dissuade him from his misjudgment of the English attitude after lengthy discussions and debates. The foreign minister was visibly concerned that disastrous influences in Hitler's immediate circle, which constantly spoke of British "bluffing" and "indecision," could prevail. Ribbentrop emphatically declared: "Some idiots have convinced the Führer that the English are merely bluffing and that all that matters is to make the German counter-bluff so strong that they will go down on their knees." Ribbentrop continued by saying that he had "made it clear to Hitler that it was a mistake to believe that the English were degenerate or weak ... I already pointed out in the report that you – Hesse – saw in London in 1937 that the English will not go quietly, but that if the British Empire falls, it will go down fighting under all circumstances... I have repeated this over and over again, but

the Führer was of a different opinion..." (Hesse, p. 186f.) Ultimately, Ribbentrop succeeded in convincing Hitler of Britain's determination to fight, as Wilson's transcript of the conversation shows. Ribbentrop could not have known that it was not "some idiots" who had demanded that the English bluff, but German conspirators such as Kordt, Goerdeler, and others, who constantly demanded that the English display their military and economic power.

Because Ribbentrop assumed that England was determined to fight, he intervened in August 1939 to initiate direct German-Polish talks. "It seems to have been Ribbentrop who brought in the High Commissioner of Danzig as a mediator between Warsaw and Berlin and inspired the Hitler-Burckhardt talks." (FO 371/23022, C 10009; Sir W. Max Muller to Cadogan, July 7, 1939.) Ribbentrop knew only too well that England was the only obstacle standing in the way of German-Polish

agreement. His fears that London wanted to "betray Germany on the Danzig question" proved to be well-founded.

Correspondence between Ribbentrop and Rothermere

The decision on war and peace lay in the hands of the British leadership: either European cooperation or fight to the bitter end. Ribbentrop had also pointed out this alternative in his personal letter to Lord Rothermere, to which Hesse expressly referred in his conversation with Wilson. During those tense summer months of 1939, the foreign minister was in written contact with the British newspaper magnate, whose influence he wanted to throw into the balance in favor of German-British understanding. On August 5, he sent a personal appeal to Rothermere, which is published in this book for the first time:

"There is an enormous amount to be said about the general international situation and about German-British relations in particular. But a letter is hardly sufficient for that. However, I owe it to our old friendship and to the great task of achieving understanding between our two countries to say the following:

Even if current developments are not moving in the direction that you and I always wanted German-English relations to take, I nevertheless hope that common sense will prevail one day. I completely agree with you that there is no problem that cannot be resolved peacefully and on a friendly basis between our two nations. As you know, I have worked toward this throughout the past years. But I must state the following clearly: The Führer's fundamental foreign policy concept, which he laid down in his books, has always been oriented toward friendship with Great Britain. Firstly, since January 30, 1933, we have not once violated vital British interests, and secondly, we have never staged a press speech or propaganda campaign against Great Britain. But the British attitude has been characterized by the exact opposite. For it was England that, since January 30, 1933, repeatedly blocked vital German interests and repeatedly stood in the way of revisions. Secondly, it was England (with the exception of your own newspapers) that relentlessly and with utter determination and harshness waged a propaganda campaign against my country—in the press, in public speeches by the highest British representatives, etc.

Everything the Führer has done over the past six and a half years has been aimed at making Germany a great nation.

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and to eliminate the worst consequences of the Treaty of Versailles in Europe, for which Germany bears no responsibility. And the Führer has endeavored to achieve this revision by peaceful means of negotiation, without ever shedding a drop of blood. Instead of thanking the Führer for removing half a dozen impossibilities of the Treaty of Versailles in Europe, conditions that could have been the cause of war on a daily basis, British statesmen seem to consider it appropriate to take these undoubted successes of the Führer in the interests of European peace and humanity as an opportunity to accuse him of evil intentions against England and the British Empire.

The British government's policy toward Poland is attempting to prevent the return of Danzig and the establishment of a link between East Prussia and the Reich, and is endeavoring to support Polish imperialist, or rather comical, ambitions—even though Great Britain has repeatedly described the corridor as an absurdity of Versailles over the past 14 years. The German people see this British attitude as proof that Great Britain always stands in Germany's way, even when no vital British interests are at stake. And England pursues this policy toward a person like the Führer, who has worked tirelessly for the past 25 years to achieve close understanding between England and Germany.

In view of this development, I can only say that if the British government cannot come to an understanding with a man like Adolf Hitler, this is one of the most extraordinary and paradoxical facts in history. Of course, an understanding would only be possible if this problem were tackled with far-sighted openness, taking into account the vital interests of both nations for generations and centuries to come, and only if all hypocrisy and narrow-mindedness on the part of the British ruling class in opposing Germany's vital needs—which England itself would consider just if it were in Germany's position—were eliminated.

However, if current British policy should once again lead to a conflict between our two nations, you know very well that no one would find this event more painful than I. But as the one who has repeatedly conveyed the Führer's historic offers to your statesmen, I must state unequivocally that the German government would bear no responsibility whatsoever for such a war. I hear again and again that the British people have been put into a warlike frame of mind against my country by influences which I am convinced are not of British origin. The German people have never, as I myself know, desired a new conflict with your country. But through the English hate campaign, a deep hatred is slowly eating its way into the hearts of every German.

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against England, a hatred that cannot be easily overcome unless England quickly changes its foreign policy. I am absolutely convinced of one thing: if these two countries ever cross swords again, this time the fight will be fought to the last man and the last bullet. And this time, the German people are convinced that this war will end in victory for Germany, because every German is aware of the overwhelming power of this nation of 80 million people under the leadership of one man and his powerful allies. As an Englishman, you certainly see this matter differently. But I am sure that you too agree that the last world war dealt a severe blow to Great Britain's position as a world power. In the last war, Adolf Hitler was just a simple soldier in the trenches, whereas today he is the leader of Germany. This is the great difference between the situation at the time of the world war and the present; and if you value my personal opinion, then I must confess quite frankly that, from a purely human point of view, I would consider another fight between our two countries to be the height of madness, and that it is also my deepest conviction that such a war would end not only with a German victory, but also with

the final dissolution of the British Empire. It is undoubtedly obvious that we National Socialists cannot rejoice at such an outcome, since we are the ones who regard the existence of the British Empire as one of the most important factors in world civilization. However, this would not change the facts as I see them.

My dear Rothermere, I still hope that the wisdom and sobriety of British statesmen will enable them to make the right decision when faced with the alternative of war, combined with the risk of the destruction of the British Empire on the one hand — especially since no vital British interests are at stake — or a final understanding and cooperation in world political matters together with Germany for the benefit of both nations, as the Führer has always wanted.

I am sure that you will not hold my frankness in expressing my views against me. Among old friends like us, frankness is the most natural thing in the world.

I hope to see you again very soon in Germany.

Yours, Ribbentrop."

(FO 800/316. A personal letter written in English by Ribbentrop to Lord Rothermere with handwritten signature. Berlin, August 5, 1933.

(FO 800/316. A personal letter written in English by Ribbentrop to Lord Rothermere with handwritten signature. Berlin, August 5, 1939.)

In his letter to Rothermere, Ribbentrop made a fundamental statement on outstanding issues. His expectation

that this personal letter would be brought to the attention of British statesmen was fulfilled. On August 12, 1939, Rothermere sent a copy of Ribbentrop's letter to British Foreign Minister Halifax. (FO 800/316, Rothermere to Halifax, August 12, 1939.) Rothermere's latest letter to Ribbentrop, dated August 5, crossed paths with the Reich Foreign Minister's letter of the same day. An important passage in Rothermere's letter confirmed what Ribbentrop himself had mentioned as threatening, namely:

"I – Rothermere – have never seen the British people in a more belligerent mood than today. They are talking just as they did before the outbreak of the Great War and the Boer War." (FO 800/316, August 5, 1939; ebf. Rothermere telegram to Ribbentrop, June 28, and FO 800/315 Rothermere to Ribbentrop, July 10 and 20, 1939.)

Chamberlain's letter to Hitler

On August 18, 1939, Henderson had already requested a "secret and personal letter from Chamberlain to Hitler, in which England's position and obligations were to be clearly recorded." (DBFP VII, No. 10.) As agreed between Henderson and Weizsäcker, this letter from Chamberlain, dated August 22, was handed over to Hitler on August 23—while Ribbentrop was in Moscow—by Henderson in the presence of Weizsäcker at the Obersalzberg. In this letter, Chamberlain confirmed that he had already taken certain "measures" in the event of war and emphasized that "whatever the nature of the German-Soviet agreement may be, it cannot alter Great Britain's obligations towards Poland." (Files VII, Doc.

200 Annex) Although England and France had attempted to unite Poland and the Soviet Union in a four-power pact directed solely against Germany, which Halifax called a "precautionary measure," and although Daladier had demanded Russia's right of passage through the Vilna Corridor as an ultimatum on August 21, and even Beck was pressured by the Western powers on August 23 to declare that he would accept Russian assistance in the event of war (Freund I, Doc. 31 and 36), Chamberlain now took a similar "precautionary measure" by Germany as an opportunity to issue a military threat against the Reich. In his letter, he refers to the accusation that England had not made its "position in 1914" clearer, an accusation that was, as is well known, contained in Weizsäcker's secret message of September 7, 1938.

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Chamberlain's entire letter shows how much Weizsäcker's suggestions had triggered the "alarming effect" in London and how hastily Chamberlain rushed to declare that he would intervene in a German-Polish military conflict. At the end of his letter, he ambiguously proposes "the opening of direct negotiations between Germany and Poland on the issues between them" in order to reach an agreement that would be "guaranteed by other powers upon its conclusion," and offers to "mediate" in the effective implementation of such guarantees to the best of his ability, as Cadogan had suggested. (Files VII, Doc. 200, Annex)

Hitler replied to Chamberlain's letter on the same day. His reply concludes with the words:

Hitler replied to Chamberlain's letter on the same day. His reply concludes with the words:

"The German government has learned that the British government intends to carry out mobilization measures whose unambiguous character as directed solely against Germany is clear from your own statements in your letter to me, Mr. Prime Minister. This is also to apply to France. Since Germany has never had any intention of taking military measures, except those of a defensive nature, either against England or against France, and since, as I have already emphasized, it has never intended and does not intend in the future to attack England or France, it can only interpret this announcement, as you, in your letter to me, can only be an act of threat against the Reich.

I therefore inform Your Excellency that, should these military announcements be carried out, I will order the immediate mobilization of the German armed forces.

The question of how to deal with European problems in a peaceful manner cannot be decided by Germany, but primarily by those who, since the crime of the Versailles Dictate, have persistently and consistently opposed any peaceful revision ... I have fought for German-English friendship all my life, but the behavior of British diplomacy has convinced me—at least so far—of the futility of such an endeavor. If this were to change in the future, no one could be happier than I." (Files VII, Doc. 201 and DBFP VII, No. 232.)

When the British mobilization continued nonetheless, Hitler also ordered military measures in Germany on the evening of August 23 and at the same time gave the order to invade Poland on August 26. He had not yet decided to do so before Chamberlain's letter containing threats and before the British mobilization measures. With the

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"August 23, 1939" is the date of Hitler's orders for "Case White," i.e., for the "planned operations against Poland." (Files VII, pp. 470 and 90, Halder diary.)

Hitler stops advance order on Ribbentrop's advice

Hitler stops advance order on Ribbentrop's advice

The circles in Germany that needed the outbreak of war to remove the National Socialist government had eliminated Ribbentrop as Hitler's advisor when Henderson, in the presence of Weizsäcker, handed Hitler the decisive letter in which Chamberlain broke his "threatening silence" for the first time. But the conspirators could not prevent Ribbentrop, just two days later, immediately after his return from Moscow and after learning of the Chamberlain-Hitler exchange of letters, from persuading Hitler on August 25 to speak with Henderson once again. Ribbentrop was convinced that even the German-Russian non-aggression pact would not change Chamberlain's attitude toward Poland, and he wanted to make one last attempt to reach an agreement with England. Hitler accepted Ribbentrop's proposal immediately. Sir Nevile Henderson was asked to come to the Reich Chancellery at 1:30 p.m. on August 25, where Hitler, in the presence of Ribbentrop, presented him with the offer of friendship to England and asked him to fly to London that same day so as not to lose any time in starting the necessary German-English negotiations. Hitler pointed out to the British ambassador the powerlessness of the Warsaw government to maintain order in its own country and went on to say:

"The Polish acts of provocation have become intolerable, regardless of who is responsible... Last night, there were 21 new border incidents, with the German side maintaining the utmost discipline... In addition, commercial aircraft had been fired upon... Germany was determined, under all circumstances, to eliminate the chaotic conditions on its eastern border, not only in the interests of peace and order, but also in the interests of European peace... He—Hitler—affirms the British Empire and is prepared to personally commit himself to its preservation and to use the power of the German Reich to this end, provided that his colonial demands, which are limited and can be negotiated peacefully, are met, whereby he is prepared to set the furthest possible deadline... He does not demand that England renounce its French commitments and could

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for its part, will not renounce its commitments to Italy... It does not wish to enter into conflict with Russia ever again... and would also be prepared to accept reasonable limitations on armaments... A revision of the western border is out of the question. The Western Wall, built at a cost of billions, is the final border of the Reich to the west.

If the British government were to consider these ideas, it could be a blessing for Germany and also for the British Empire. If it rejects these ideas, there will be war. Under no circumstances would Great Britain emerge stronger from this war; the last war had already proven this." (DBFP VII, No. 284, Files VII, Doc. 265.) Protocol interpreter Dr. Schmidt.

After this conversation, which lasted about an hour and ended at 2:30 p.m., Henderson immediately informed his government by telephone that he had "made a statement to Hitler and suggested flying back to London." (Colvin, p. 238.) Even before leaving for Wilhelmstraße, Henderson had informed Halifax of Hitler's unexpected invitation in a postscript to a private letter, without specifying the time.

(DBFP VI, No. 312.) In another personal letter to Cadogan dated August 25—also without specifying the time—Henderson warned his government of the dangerous path it had now embarked upon: "Last year we led the Czechs to ruin, and this March we led the Poles down the same path, ad nauseam." (DBFP VII, No. 313.) Cabinet papers show that after his telephone call, Henderson sent a telegram summarizing Hitler's "message" as follows: "The Polish question must be settled first, then he will make an offer to England." Hitler also personally committed himself to the continued existence of the British Empire. When, in the late afternoon of August 25, the ratification of the Anglo-Polish Guarantee Pact and Mussolini's rejection arrived in Berlin, Ribbentrop was able to persuade Hitler to withdraw the order to advance of August 23 without hesitation.

As the British response to Germany's offer of friendship to England, the ratification of the Anglo-Polish Guarantee Treaty was demonstratively carried out at 5:30 p.m. and immediately announced to the world via radio broadcast. In Germany, this pact had to be seen "as a challenge and an explicit declaration by the British government that it did not want a peaceful solution." (Birger Dahlerus, Der letzte Versuch [The Last Attempt], Munich 1948, p. 54; A. v. R., Deutsch-Englische Geheimverbindungen [German-English Secret Connections], p. 408, col.

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Halifax note to Daladier

Halifax had already sent a telegram at 3:30 p.m. on August 25 to the British ambassador in Paris, Sir Eric Phipps—brother-in-law of Sir Robert Vansittart—with instructions for the French government. The note read as follows:

Lord Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris) Telegram Foreign Office, August 25, 1939, 3:30 p.m.

1. Please explain immediately to the French government that we must now coordinate our actions without delay in the event that we have to fulfill our obligations to Poland, i.e., in the event of a German violation of Polish territory, which Poland would resist.

2. In this case, His Majesty's Government would propose to demand that the German Government, within a specified period, halt its troops and declare its readiness to enter into negotiations, failing which His Majesty's Government would be compelled to take all necessary steps to fulfill its obligations towards Poland upon the expiry of the period.

3. I would be pleased to learn as soon as possible that the French government agrees with us, so that in the event of an emergency there will be no confusion or loss of time. (DBFP VII, No. 278.)

Point 1 of the Halifax directive shows that, despite Germany's offer of friendship to England aimed at easing tensions, the Chamberlain government continued to count on Poland's resistance and was already trying to involve its most important ally, France, in future action against Germany. Point 2 proposes that, in the event that Germany has already violated Polish territory, the French government should join the British government in demanding that the Reich government halt its troops within a specified period and declare its willingness to enter into negotiations. Point 3 states that the French government should expressly agree to this course of action proposed by England in the event of a conflict. But Chamberlain rejected his own proposal just one week later. This was because he rejected,

in anticipation, Mussolini's proposal for an armistice and conference of September 1, 1939, even though its provisions on the entry into force of the ceasefire were entirely in line with his own proposals, which he had submitted to the French through the Halifax message of August 25. The

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The following day at 10:04 a.m., British Ambassador Phipps was able to inform his government by telephone that the French government had agreed to the Halifax proposal. (DBFP VII, note to No. 278, Doc. 343.)

When the emergency arose on September 1—that is, the case of a German violation of Polish territory as envisaged in the Halifax message—Chamberlain suddenly demanded, contrary to the Halifax note of August 25, that German troops should not only be "held back," but now demanded that the troops be "withdrawn" to the border before negotiations with Germany could begin. The French government resisted this new and extraordinary demand. Bonnet, with Daladier's support, made every effort to ensure the success of the Italian armistice plan, especially since it was identical to the original Halifax plan of August 25, which France had accepted. These facts are evident from documents that will be presented later and show that the German government also approved Mussolini's efforts.

Trott zu Solz brings in Dahlerus

In the summer of 1939, David Astor traveled to Germany to get a picture of the political situation and submitted the following report on his observations to Lord Perth:

"On the Danzig question, all Germans are of the same opinion that Hitler has the absolute right to officially declare the Free City German. England has no right to prevent the free decision of the people of Danzig, and Hitler will resolve the question 'locally' without starting a war. It was believed that the return of Danzig and the modest desire for a road and railway through the corridor could have been settled amicably between Germany and Poland if we had not rashly given guarantees to Poland... A German Danzig could not "oppress" the Poles, especially since Danzig itself needed Polish trade for its existence. On any other contentious issue, Hitler would have less support within Germany. In my opinion, the peaceful incorporation of Danzig would not be a good reason for England to go to war. Hitler does not want to be involved in a world war, any more than the German people do. The chancellor could take military action due to a lack of coal, oil, food, etc. He cannot survive a long armed peace. Germany wants to participate in world trade again. There is mistrust of the Western powers and they are being watched.

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that the promises of goodwill are directed at the German people or indirectly at a future more compliant regime ... There are three potentially powerful groups that are opposed to a military solution: the industrialists, the Ministry of Economics, and the generals. Attempts are being made to rally them behind Göring in order to eliminate Ribbentrop.

My friend von Trott zu Solz and his allies are of the opinion that the British spokesmen have made sufficient proposals for negotiation at the moment. The clarification of the Danzig question: to oppose a decision on annexation once and for all, but in an unprovocative manner like the French: no mockery or taunts against the leaders, nor any attempt to separate the leaders from the people, as has been customary in the press and in speeches up to now! Only an open and convincing demonstration of civil

readiness and military strength can succeed. These are the wishes of those who want to activate Göring... He should pursue a personal policy. This will of course be difficult, as neither side wants to start peace talks. On the other hand, my friend considers it important that Göring be praised for giving the impression that he wants peace talks. My friend therefore suggests that, after sufficient preparation for the talks, Göring be informed of our willingness to negotiate, with the explanation that this is not a trick, but that we have a genuine understanding of Germany's wishes. My friend... suggests four possibilities:

A visit by a non-British personality who could presumably establish good contact with Göring, such as Colonel Lindbergh. A visit by a semi-official spokesman, an admiral. A conversation with a seemingly chance visitor in Berlin, a suitable delegate. An invitation to Göring to send an air marshal here, preferably Udet, to get a real impression of our growing air force, in the hope of a return invitation of greater political value. The last of these four proposals would be the most desirable, because then the initiative for political talks would be Göring's responsibility. If Göring were to propose informative talks, England should accept them without hesitation, but not go beyond that, in order to avoid giving the impression of British timidity ... Everything must be well prepared before the talks begin. Göring's somewhat 'vain personality' should not be insulted, but neither should he be made a hero in order to protect him from internal jealousies.

If the moderates in Germany, together with British statesmen, were to direct the Nazis' thoughts toward the empty areas of the world, bring their economy as closely as possible to that of the democracies through re-entry into world trade, and guide them past the danger point from which they believe they can solve their problems through war, then Nazism, with its power politics, would die a natural death... The destruction of Nazism by force will lead to a European disaster." (FO 371/22974, C 9967, July 9, 1939. Report by David Astor to Lord Perth.)

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On this unreal basis, as if Ribbentrop wanted war and Göring wanted peace, Astor believed that British policy should be intensified. The journalist Colvin, who conspicuously has his say in this official Foreign Office document, shares the same view and notes in his own hand: "I am interested in the efforts to eliminate Ribbentrop because in my memorandum C 10057/15 I reflected the view of the German opposition that a vigorous campaign against Ribbentrop might turn the moderate elements in the cabinet against him and thus bring about a final break in the government." In a further marginal note, this proposal is rejected as too dangerous, "because publicly attacking Ribbentrop on British radio would have the opposite effect." This Astor report with Trott zu Solz's advice clearly shows the conspirators' tactics: to help the British, they are trying to win over Göring and brand him as one of their own. On the other hand, they want to use Ribbentrop to bring down the German government. Foreign Office official F. K. Roberts comments on this and on Trott zu Solz's suggestions in a handwritten note in the margin:

"If Germany's situation is so bad, we don't need to run after him. Göring is certainly our best card, but he has no influence on the Führer... Invitations to Udet and Milch were dropped, but unofficial British industrialists are supposed to meet Göring in early August through a Swedish intermediary. We were informed of this confidentially. Göring is to be impressed and propose the meeting himself." (ibid.)

The "Swedish intermediary" mentioned here was Birger Dahlerus, who, as is well known, made contact

with Göring in August, as Trott had requested Solz to do. The British were secretly informed of this move by the conspirators.

On August 7, the planned meeting between Göring and the British economists finally took place in the presence of Dahlerus at Sönke Nissen Koog. The fact that Göring was willing to talk to seemingly unimportant Englishmen three days after Chodacki's completely unjustified Danzig ultimatum, which Burckhardt still considers decisive for the outbreak of war, testifies to his desire to reach a compromise with the British. William Strang, however, advised his government to reject Göring's proposal to demarcate spheres of interest in southern and southeastern Europe, as this would effectively mean

"total conquest," or at least an "encroachment on the independence or neutrality of certain countries in Eastern Europe, whose independence is to be defended by His Majesty's Government if the country concerned resists"! In return, however, England would have had to grant protection to the Balkan countries, which Chamberlain was just as unwilling to do as he was to make the guarantee to Poland effective. Göring declared that Germany "did not want Romania, Bulgaria, or Yugoslavia, and that even the Croats had asked us to supply them with weapons, but that we had not done so." Göring ended the conversation with the words, "that the Führer alone determines Germany's position, and Dahlerus should repeat to his English friends that the decision rests solely with the Führer." (DBFP VI, p. 751ff.)

At that time, the question arose in Berlin as to who should be sent to Russia as the German plenipotentiary. Ribbentrop initially suggested "sending Göring to Moscow" because he himself might be too compromised by his Japanese connections and the Anti-Comintern Pact. But Hitler insisted that Ribbentrop take on the mission. (J. v. Ribbentrop, Zwischen London und Moskau, p. 177.) While Ribbentrop was negotiating with Stalin, Göring called Dahlerus on August 23—the day Henderson delivered Chamberlain's letter to Hitler at Obersalzberg—and asked him to come to Berlin. There, on August 24, he explained to him that the treaty with Russia had removed the danger of a two-front war, "but at the same time emphasized that the German government still sincerely wished to reach an agreement with England." (Dahlerus, Der letzte Versuch, p. 51f.) Göring regretted that the conference he had proposed to the British on August 7 "had not come about," since he could not have known that his meeting with the British economists had been arranged by the German conspirators solely to prevent the real negotiations on Poland that Hitler wanted. Göring therefore asked Dahlerus to "fly to England the following day" to establish personal contact between him and the Foreign Office. When Dahlerus arrived in England on August 25, he spoke with Halifax that same evening, who told him that his mission was obsolete because "Hitler and Ribbentrop had meanwhile begun official talks with Henderson." (DBFP VII, p. 234£.)

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to explore a German-Polish agreement. Halifax rejected everything as "completely worthless," even

though Henderson had asked him to "take Hitler's offer of friendship very seriously and not to give cause for justified bitterness by a brusque rejection." (DBFP VII, p. 234 note and No. 286.) In order not to lose any time for negotiations, Hitler had asked Ambassador Henderson to fly to London on August 25. However, he did not leave Berlin until August 26, traveling in Hitler's private plane. The Chancellor had decided on his offer to England even before the ratification of the Anglo-Polish Guarantee Pact and Mussolini's rejection, because the alternative to a peaceful German-English agreement could only be a long and bloody war. In order to prevent military conflict, Hitler offered to defend the British Empire with the German Wehrmacht. He wanted to hold talks with the British government on this matter. Chamberlain, however, did not want any exchange of ideas. He therefore kept Henderson in London until August 28 and sent the Swede Dahlerus to Berlin on August 27 as a "forerunner," i.e., a messenger, allegedly to prepare the way for the final British response to the German offer. However, his intention was quite the opposite, as he had previously "made it clear verbally" to the Swede with regard to the German offer of friendship that it was out of the question for the British government

"it was not feasible to enter into negotiations with Germany on a number of important issues concerning German-British relations while it was possible at any time that Germany might invade Poland, in which case Britain would find itself at war with Germany." (DBFP VII, No. 349, note 7, Annex 2.)

Halifax, who was present at this conversation, "informed his colleagues the following day of the rejection of the German offer" and of the content of the conversation that had taken place between Hitler and Dahlerus during the night of August 26 to 27. Halifax explained to the cabinet:

"The Prime Minister had asked Dahlerus whether he had any indication of the conditions Hitler would set for the settlement of the Polish question. Dahlerus had denied this but added that he suspected Hitler wanted Danzig to return to the Reich but would give the Poles a free port. He also suspected that Hitler would demand the return of the corridor to Germany but would grant a new Polish corridor to Gdynia. The Prime Minister had told Dahlerus that if these were the German conditions, then

he sees no prospect of a settlement and believes that the Poles would rather fight than give back the corridor." (ibid.)

Dahlerus' assumption that Hitler would "demand the return of the corridor to Germany" was unjustified, but Chamberlain took it up and presented it as true in order to reject talks with Germany. Thus, the British cabinet was also misinformed about Hitler's wishes. For this purpose, Dahlerus, a foreigner, had been brought into the talks with England by the German conspirators in order to keep Ambassador Henderson, whose entire efforts were directed toward a German-English agreement, out of the picture. Ribbentrop knew nothing of Göring's contacts with London, let alone of the secret rejection of the German peace offer. Hitler only informed him after the fake negotiations between Göring and the Swede had failed, without knowing that they had been mere sham negotiations. However, Hitler's remark to Ribbentrop that he did not think much of the Dahlerus talks shows that he suspected this. (J. v. Ribbentrop, Zwischen London und Moskau, p. 198.)

Without Trott's report to Solz, which David Astor forwarded to the Foreign Office, and without Roberts' accompanying marginal note, we would still be unaware of the extent of the Chamberlain-Dahlerus comedy. Above all, we would not know that it was the German conspirators who had

suggested to the Swedes that they cooperate against Germany in order to deceive Göring. It was expected that he would listen to his late wife Karin's compatriot. On August 26, Dahlerus brought an informal document without a salutation or signature from Halifax to Göring in Berlin. The field marshal took this paper with him to the Reich Chancellery that same evening, believing that it was proof of the British statesmen's desire for peace, which he could use to convince Hitler of England's good will. (DBFP VI, Appendix 1 to No. 349.) Hitler then received the Swedish envoy sent by Chamberlain late at night on August 27. It was the first and only conversation he had with Dahlerus, who was back in London on August 27. There he received from Under-Secretary Cadogan an identity card written on official Foreign Office letterhead, which authorized him to enter the British Embassy in Berlin at any time. With this authorization, the Swede was to inform Ambassador Henderson

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continuously convey instructions on how he should behave in his talks with the Germans. Conversely, he informed London of everything he learned in Berlin. Thus, on the morning of August 30, he not only conveyed to Chamberlain the original text of the German reply note from the previous evening, but also informed him of the main content of the new German proposals to Poland, the so-called Sixteen Points, which were to be handed over to a Polish plenipotentiary in Berlin that same day.

The German 16 points

Hitler had let the British government know through Henderson and Göring that he was working on extremely moderate proposals for negotiations with Poland. However, on August 27, in response to Germany's offer of friendship to England, Poland decided on total mobilization, which was kept secret for two days at London's request. Chamberlain's chief advisers, Kirkpatrick, Sargent, Vansittart, and Halifax, had the greatest "fears of a settlement without war" precisely because of this German offer, which would have left Germany's strength intact. (DBFP VII, No. 455, note 8.)

On August 28, Henderson was sent back to Berlin with the official British reply to the German offer of friendship and handed it to Hitler in the presence of Ribbentrop that same evening. In the ensuing conversation, Hitler emphatically declared to the ambassador that he was still "willing to negotiate if there was a Polish government that was willing to be reasonable and really had control of the country." Henderson, for his part, repeated several times that "Hitler could have the British friendship he desired if he did not make excessive demands on Poland." Hitler agreed to an exchange of populations between Germany and Poland and said that he would be able to give a response to the other points in the British note only after careful consideration, which he would deliver to the ambassador in writing the following day. Henderson answered Hitler's question,

"whether England was prepared to accept an alliance with Germany, as follows: I personally do not rule out such a possibility, provided that the development of events would justify it." (DBFP VII, No. 455.)

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Although Henderson was able to base his personal opinion on the official text of the British note to

Germany dated August 28, 1939, which stated in black and white that the British government "fully shared" Hitler's desire for friendly German-British relations, his response caused considerable agitation among British politicians and earned him a sharp rebuke. (DBFP VI, No. 447.) On August 29, Sir Orme Sargent, Ivone A. Kirkpatrick, and Lord Halifax, contrary to the wording of the official British reply of the previous day, finally rejected the German offer of friendship. Vansittart emphatically agreed with this fateful decision by Chamberlain's closest associates and also protested to the Prime Minister about Henderson's above-quoted reply to Hitler. He demanded that the ambassador be warned "not to allow himself to be drawn again by the Germans onto such a dangerous path," — namely that he personally believed in the possibility of a German-English alliance — because, in Vansittart's view, the mere idea of a German-British alliance would "finish England in the United States and make the worst impression there and in all friendly countries." He categorically demanded that "we must be on our guard against such talks." (DBFP VII, No. 455, note 8; German-English Secret Connections, p. 432; m. Sp.) Halifax commented approvingly on this statement by his chief advisor: "Sir R. Vansittart's note is full of weight!" (ibid.)

This showed once again how right Ribbentrop was in his assessment of Vansittart's personality and actions when he wrote in his "Conclusions" that Vansittart, in his position as "chief diplomatic adviser to the British Foreign Secretary, is our most important and most tenacious opponent and can at any time play a leading role in the diplomatic game against Germany." (File I, Doc. 93.)

In response to the official British note, the German government accepted on August 29 the British demand for "direct negotiations between Germany and Poland." It also accepted the international guarantees that were to provide the necessary economic and political security for "the continued existence of the Polish state." Hitler decided to make the following concessions:

"solely under the impression of the written communication he had received from the British government that it too was a friend

"The German government wishes to conclude a trade agreement based on the points of reference given to Ambassador Henderson on August 25."

The German note concludes as follows:

"Furthermore, the German Reich Government never intended in its proposals to attack the vital interests of Poland or to call into question the existence of an independent Polish state. Under these circumstances, the German Reich government therefore agrees to accept the proposed mediation of the British government for the dispatch of a Polish representative with full powers to Berlin. It expects this representative to arrive on Wednesday, August 30, 1939.

The Reich government will immediately work out proposals for a solution acceptable to it and, if possible, make these available to the British government before the arrival of the Polish negotiator." (Files VII, Doc. 421; DBFP VII, No. 498, Annex m. Sp.)

When the cabinet discussed Germany's request for a Polish negotiator, it was Chamberlain who called this request "the most unsatisfactory thing in Hitler's reply" and considered it crucial to make it perfectly clear that we would not give in on this point. (Colvin p. 244.) What did Chamberlain mean by "this point" on which he would not yield? He meant that no German-Polish talks should take place that

could bring about an agreement between Berlin and Warsaw. Although Chamberlain had offered himself as a mediator and Hitler had now accepted this offer, the prime minister himself sabotaged any possibility of a Polish representative coming to Germany. His entire statesmanship consisted of shifting the blame for the failure of the German-Polish negotiations onto Germany, even though he alone was responsible for this. Dahlerus, who had meanwhile returned to London, was also informed that it was completely unreasonable to expect a Polish representative to come to Berlin. After Hitler had conveyed the promised German reply to the British note of August 28 to Henderson in the presence of Ribbentrop on the evening of August 29, the ambassador was instructed to "be on his guard" not to allow himself to be drawn into friendly talks again. The unfortunate representative of the British government therefore had no other option but to resort to "shouting at the top of his voice" over a "minor point," presumably in the expectation that Hitler would then break off the negotiations. But because Hitler wanted to preserve peace and

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wanted to negotiate with England and Poland, he accepted the unqualified behavior of the British mission chief with rare calm, so that the conversation could still be brought to a conclusion. (DBFP VII, No. 508; German-English Secret Connections, p. 445.)

It is striking that the files on German foreign policy published by the Allies do not contain the two German protocols on Hitler's talks with Henderson in the presence of Ribbentrop on August 28 and 29, 1939. There is only an informal transcript of the conversation of "August 28, 1939, 10:30 p.m.," signed "Schmidt, Envoy," which contains no indication that it was presented to Hitler or Ribbentrop. (ADAP VII, Doc. 348.) In this document about the conversation on August 28, the interpreter Schmidt also reports on events that did not take place until the following day, such as that the British ambassador had turned against Hitler in "extreme agitation," but he is referring to Henderson's aforementioned "shouting" in the Reich Chancellery on August 29. The conversation on August 28, on the other hand, had been very calm. The concealment of the German minutes of the Hitler-Henderson talks of August 28 and 29, 1939, has made it easy for established historiography to portray the events of those days in line with the victors' propaganda. For up to now, we have only had Henderson's reports at our disposal, while Ribbentrop's are missing.

On the evening of August 29, immediately after receiving the German reply, Henderson telegraphed to London that the "German government would immediately work out proposals for an acceptable settlement with Poland and, if possible, inform the British government before the arrival of a Polish plenipotentiary." (DBFP VII, No. 490, m. Sp.) The assertion that England was to be informed of the German proposals before the arrival of a Polish delegate is a deliberate deception. For the German reply, receipt of which Henderson confirmed in the same telegram No. 490, expressly states that "also" the British government should be informed of the proposals "if possible before the arrival" of a Polish representative. Henderson sent the original German text to London on the evening of August 29, but Halifax allegedly did not receive it until September 2. (DBFP VII, No. 498.) On August 30, Henderson sent the translation of the German reply note prepared at the British Embassy.

to Halifax, in which the last paragraph has also been translated incorrectly. Here, too, it is incorrectly stated that the Reich government had agreed to inform the British government of its proposals to

Poland "before" the arrival of a Polish representative. Furthermore, the word "also" is missing in this translation, which stated that, in addition to the Polish government, which was to be informed first, the British government was also to be made aware of the German proposals. (DBFP VII, No. 490, 498, 502; m. Sp.) Chamberlain still maintained these deliberate mistranslations, which were intended to make it appear to the world that England was demanding that the proposals intended for Warsaw be accepted even if a Polish representative did not come, in his speech to the House of Commons on the evening of September 1, 1939. (British Blue Book, London 1939, No. 105.) In order to enable the British Prime Minister to present such a falsified translation of the German note to the world public as true, the original text of the German reply note, written in German and sent by Henderson on August 29, was not officially delivered to Halifax until September 2, 1939. This original German text is also printed in the British documentation, Vol. VII as No. 498. (German-English Secret Communications, p. 440.)

Kleist-Schmenzin back at the British Embassy

In response to Henderson's telegraphic report that Hitler had agreed to immediate direct negotiations with Poland and had invited a plenipotentiary from Warsaw to Berlin on August 30 for this purpose in order to "ensure lasting friendship with England," Halifax dispatched a dispatch to Henderson, which Dahlerus already knew:

"We will carefully consider the German government's response, but it is of course unreasonable to expect that we can bring a Polish representative to Berlin today, and the German government should not count on this. It would be good if you could immediately inform the relevant authorities of this through the appropriate channels. We hope to receive your reply this afternoon."

Forwarded to Warsaw, Rome, and Paris. (DBFP VII, No. 504, m. Sp.)

Regarding the "proper" authorities in Germany for London, which are to be informed through "appropriate channels"

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Ribbentrop should not have been included, because then it would have had to say "the German government" instead of "the competent authorities." However, the decisive factor for the British was the State Secretary von Weizsäcker and his circle, who therefore knew already in the early hours of August 30 that, at the instigation of the British, no Polish plenipotentiary would come to Berlin. The Reich government, which had not been informed, waited until after midnight for the Polish negotiator. Since the flight time from Warsaw to Berlin was only 1½ hours at that time, the Polish government would have had almost a whole day to appoint a plenipotentiary, instruct him, and send him to Berlin in time. By passing on the above Halifax instructions to Warsaw – in addition to Rome and Paris – Colonel Beck knew that he was not allowed to send a representative to Berlin. The fact that Chamberlain deliberately prevented his own demand of August 28, that German-Polish negotiations should begin immediately, shows the full extent of his deception. He abused his self-appointed role as mediator solely to prevent contact between Berlin and Warsaw until the outbreak of war. In doing so, he was given decisive assistance by the German conspirators, who brought Chamberlain into contact with the Swede Dahlerus in order to sabotage the real negotiations with Poland that Hitler wanted.

Henderson had immediately carried out his mission to inform the German authorities "in a position to decide" in London through the appropriate channels. For on the morning of August 30, German Major Ewald von Kleist-Schmenzin appeared at the British Embassy in Berlin. He, who was "in close contact with the War Ministry," gave the British military attaché a detailed verbal report on the internal situation in Germany, which Henderson passed on to Halifax in a "telegram sent by telephone." Kleist-Schmenzin revealed the following military secrets:

"Hitler has forced the General Staff to change the plan against Poland, according to which Warsaw was to be attacked from East Prussia on a broad front in a north-south direction, in conjunction with the advance of their main troops from Bohemia-Moravia and western Slovakia in a north-easterly direction towards Krakow... The new plan consists of a direct offensive from Pomerania and the border region against Warsaw... Brauchitsch has stated that a war on two fronts is out of the question because Poland's resistance is considerable and the new plan cannot bring about a quick decision. The Siegfried Line is only temporary...

strong in places, as proven by tests. Weak points include Freiburg, Saarbrücken, and Aachen. The General Staff fears that a breakthrough through the Siegfried Line is possible... After my (Henderson's) visit on August 23, Hitler suffered a nervous breakdown... The General Staff wants to exploit Hitler's nervous state to enable a military coup, but it must first be sure that England will not give in... If the General Staff knew that an attack on the Siegfried Line was certain, it would strengthen its position... The mood in the German Air Force is good, but not in the army, and it is the army that will ultimately decide the outcome...Generals Hammerstein, Beck, and Rundstedt have been given independent high command positions, and these are the men in whom the General Staff has confidence... German forces are being concentrated in the areas of Landsberg, Schneidemühl, and Schlochau. Tempelburg was the largest Horch and D-F center on the Eastern Front... If the General Staff were finally convinced that Ribbentrop's reports on England were false, this would favor the position of the dissident elements. Forward to Warsaw." (DBFP VI, No. 546.)

Kirkpatrick adds the following in his marginal note to this secret report:

"This information confirms the deployment order that Dahlerus saw (No. 437). We have independent information that Halder caused difficulties.

I am certain that the Germans fear an attack on the Siegfried Line, but our position is not strong enough to put pressure on the French to expose themselves to such risks and losses... Based on the description, I cannot identify this officer, but I believe he is a retired officer who is connected with the reactionary elements of the General Staff. He gave us a lot of fairly accurate information last September when he tried to persuade us to resist Hitler.

This report was read to the Prime Minister on the morning of August 31." (DBFP VII, note 4 to No. 546.)

Chamberlain passed on Kleist-Schmenzin's treasonous secret information to Colonel Beck the following day, August 31, in order to maintain Poland's resistance to Germany's willingness to negotiate. (DBFP VII, No. 605.)

Kleist-Schmenzin's intervention was not without influence on the British reply of August 30, which

rejected the German desire for negotiations on all points. England sought new excuses to prevent German-Polish contacts. Henderson had to declare on behalf of his government, which only two days earlier had called for direct and immediate German-Polish

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After demanding negotiations, Ribbentrop now proposed handing over the German negotiating points to the Polish ambassador for forwarding to Warsaw.

Midnight talks between Ribbentrop and Henderson on August 30, 1939

There is a report from Ribbentrop's office about August 30, 1939, which concerns an intercepted telephone conversation between London and Henderson in Berlin:

An unknown person in the Foreign Office talks to Henderson and informs him that he will now receive a telegram, a long one and a short one. Everyone in the Foreign Office has read the telegram over the shouting. Henderson should not get upset about it. The Prime Minister had read it personally and believed that the telegram Henderson was about to receive could help him. It was intended to serve as a guide. Henderson should not interpret it differently, as telegrams were generally written very quickly. The Prime Minister had explained that he understood everything quite well, as he had been over there and therefore understood everything quite well.

Henderson should recognize what the proposal meant, which had been drafted with the intention of helping him to pursue the matter further. Henderson replied that the impression he had gained was good. He could not write private letters at present, but his impression was good.

The Foreign Office goes on to explain that, as Henderson knows, things are very calm in London. The unknown woman believes that they are on the right track. They—the Germans—cannot really expect to succeed again by summoning people, handing them documents, and having them sign them along the pre-printed lines. All that is over. This must be understood in Berlin as well as in London.

Incidentally, London is always prepared to do what Henderson said London was prepared to do. But they do not want to hear about anything else in London. Henderson, who agrees with this statement, declares that London should remain absolutely unshakeable. (Ribbentrop Office Vol. 1-4, T 120, 32, 29636.)

The "shouting" mentioned in the second paragraph was Henderson's shouting at Hitler the day before over a "minor point." But he also received confirmation by telegram from Halifax that his "language" of August 29 at the Reich Chancellery in London was "warmly approved." (DBFP VI, No. 545.) In the following paragraphs, Chamberlain wants to help the ambassador and, with his two telegrams, show him the "way."

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instructions on how to proceed with the German government. In one telegram, presumably No. 529, Henderson is informed of Dahlerus' arrival in Berlin between 9:30 and 10:30 p.m., whom he must see before Dahlerus goes to Göring. Telegram No. 534, sent from London at 5:40 p.m., informed

Henderson that he should make a statement to the German Chancellor, but not before receiving further instructions from Halifax. (DBFP VII.) These further instructions expressly state that Henderson should not go to the Foreign Office until "after midnight," and this was communicated to both Rome and Warsaw. In the penultimate paragraph, Henderson is instructed not to accept any further proposals from the German government. The last paragraph refers to the German conspirators, for whom England was "always ready." Chamberlain expressly stated that he understood the question about which Henderson "had said that London was ready," because he had "been over there and therefore understood everything very well." But Chamberlain did not want to hear about "other matters," i.e., he did not allow Henderson to mediate between the Germans and the Poles, as the ambassador had requested in his last private letters. Henderson now knew what he had to do and therefore conducted the midnight talks with Ribbentrop in a conspicuously provocative manner and wrote a false and defamatory report about their course.

That same morning, Dahlerus had again been received by "Chamberlain, Halifax, and Cadogan in the Cabinet Room at Downing Street" to receive their report on the latest events in Germany. The main issue was the German proposals to Poland, already announced to the British government, known as the 16 points for negotiation.

Proposal for a settlement of the Danzig Corridor problem and the German-Polish minority question.

The situation between the German Reich and Poland is currently such that any further incident could lead to a clash between the military forces that have been deployed on both sides. Any peaceful solution must be such that the events that caused this situation cannot be repeated at the next opportunity, thereby placing not only Eastern Europe but also other areas in the same state of tension.

The causes of this development lie

1. in the impossible border demarcation imposed by the Versailles Dictate,

2. in the impossible treatment of the minority in the separated territories.

The German Reich Government therefore bases these proposals on the idea of finding a final solution that eliminates the impossible situation of the border demarcation, secures vital transport links for both sides, eliminates the minority problem as far as possible, and, where this is not possible, makes the fate of minorities bearable by guaranteeing their rights.

The German Reich Government is convinced that it is essential to uncover the economic and physical damage that has occurred since 1918 and to make full reparation for it. It naturally regards this obligation as binding on both parties.

These considerations give rise to the following practical proposals:

1. The Free City of Danzig shall immediately return to the German Reich on account of its purely German character and the unanimous will of its population.

2. The territory of the so-called Corridor, which extends from the Baltic Sea to the line Marienwerder-Graudenz-Kulm-Bromberg (including these cities) and then roughly westward to Schönlanke, shall

decide for itself whether it belongs to Germany or Poland.

3. For this purpose, a vote shall be held in this area. All Germans who were resident in this area on January 1, 1918, or who were born there up to that date, and likewise all Poles, Kashubians, etc., who were resident in this area on that date or who were born there up to that date, shall be entitled to vote. Germans expelled from this territory shall return to cast their votes. In order to ensure an objective vote and to guarantee the extensive preparatory work necessary for this, the aforementioned territory shall be placed, similar to the Saar region, under the authority of an international commission to be formed immediately by the four great powers, Italy, the Soviet Union, France, and England. This commission shall exercise all sovereign rights in this territory. To this end, this territory shall be evacuated by the Polish military, the Polish police, and the Polish authorities within the shortest possible time to be agreed upon.

4. The Polish port of Gdynia, which is fundamentally Polish territory insofar as it is limited to the Polish settlement, shall be excluded from this territory. The exact boundaries of this Polish port city shall be determined between Germany

and Poland and, if necessary, to be determined by an international arbitration tribunal.

5. In order to ensure that sufficient time is available for the extensive work required to conduct a fair vote, this vote shall not take place before the expiry of 12 months.

6. In order to guarantee Germany unrestricted access to East Prussia and Poland unrestricted access to the sea during this period, roads and railways shall be designated to allow free transit traffic. Only those charges may be levied which are necessary for the maintenance of the transport routes or for the performance of the transport operations.

7. The affiliation of the territory shall be decided by a simple majority of the votes cast.

8. In order to guarantee the safety of free traffic between Germany and its province of Danzig-East Prussia and Poland's connection to the sea after the vote, regardless of the outcome, if the voting area falls to Poland, Germany will be granted an extraterritorial traffic zone, for example in the direction of Bütow-Danzig or Dirschau, for the construction of a Reichsautobahn and a four-track railway line. The construction of the road and the railway will be carried out in such a way that the Polish communication routes are not affected, i.e. Dirschau, for the construction of a Reich motorway and a four-track railway line. The road and railway will be built in such a way that Polish communication routes are not affected, i.e., they will either be crossed over or under. The width of this zone is set at 1 km and is German territory.

If the vote is in favor of Germany, Poland shall be granted the same rights to free and unrestricted traffic to its port of Gdynia as Germany would be entitled to for an equally extraterritorial road or rail link.

9. In the event of the corridor reverting to the German Reich, the latter declares its willingness to carry out an exchange of populations with Poland to the extent that the corridor is suitable for this purpose.

10. Any special rights desired by Poland in the port of Danzig would be negotiated on an equal footing

with the same rights for Germany in the port of Gdynia.

11. In order to eliminate any feeling of threat on either side in this area, Danzig and Gdynia would retain their character as purely commercial cities, i.e., without military installations or fortifications.

12. The Hela Peninsula, which, according to the vote, would either become part of Poland or Germany, would in any case also be demilitarized.

13. Since the German Reich Government has the most serious complaints to make against the treatment of the Polish minority,

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the Polish Government, for its part, considers it necessary to lodge complaints against Germany, both parties agree that these complaints shall be submitted to an internationally composed commission of inquiry, which shall have the task of investigating all complaints concerning economic and physical damage and other acts of terrorism. Germany and Poland undertake to make good all economic and other damage caused to minorities on both sides since 1918, to revoke all expropriations, or to provide full compensation to those affected for these and other interventions in economic life.

14. In order to relieve the Germans remaining in Poland and the Poles remaining in Germany of the feeling of being deprived of international rights and, above all, to guarantee them security from being called upon to perform acts or services incompatible with their national feeling, Germany and Poland agree to secure the rights of minorities on both sides by means of the most comprehensive and binding agreements in order to guarantee these minorities the preservation, free development, and exercise of their national culture, and in particular to permit them to organize themselves as they deem necessary for this purpose. Both parties undertake not to call members of minorities into military service.

15. In the event of an agreement based on these proposals, Germany and Poland declare their readiness to order and carry out the immediate demobilization of their armed forces.

16. The further measures necessary to expedite the above agreements shall be jointly agreed upon by Germany and Poland.

Göring had informed the Swede of the main content of these points of negotiation with the intention of convincing this "middleman" of Hitler's sincere desire for understanding. Official London, which a few hours earlier had prevented a Polish representative from coming to Berlin, but had only informed the German conspirators of this, already knew at 10:30 a.m. on August 30 that referendums were planned in those parts of the corridor where there was a "mixed German-Polish population." Depending on the outcome of the plebiscite, either Germany or Poland was to receive "a traffic zone, a 'corridor through the corridor'; the treaty was to be guaranteed by the five great powers." This

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These are just a few of the points that emerge from the additional written report by the Swede, which is published in the British file documentation Vol. VIlals No. 514.

During the verbal exchange, Chamberlain personally asked his Swedish agent various questions, such as whether he considered it "a decisive condition from the German point of view that a Polish delegate

come to Berlin today." (DBFP VII, No. 514.) Dahlerus, who had only left Berlin for London at 4 a.m. in Göring's plane and was acting as one of the "appropriate channels" to the German conspirators, replied that he did not consider this "decisive, but that he would call Field Marshal Göring about this point." The Swede also reported to the British cabinet leadership that Göring had marked the areas that were to remain German in green on a map and those that were considered purely Polish in red. Dahlerus had this map with him when he was in London on August 30 and still had it after the war ended. (Dahlerus, p. 97f.)

Of course, Henderson had also been informed by Dahlerus – and certainly also by the conspirators – about the content of the proposals to Poland before he went to Wilhelmstraße shortly after midnight, as instructed, even though he had announced his arrival at Ribbentrop's office for 11 p.m. He had to cause this delay because his government obviously wanted to let the deadline for direct German-Polish negotiations pass. Hitler and Ribbentrop, however, did not know that the British government was already aware of the German proposals, otherwise the foreign minister would not have received instructions from Hitler to inform Henderson "only briefly of the main points" because a Polish representative had not come. (J. von Ribbentrop, Zwischen London und Moskau, p. 194f.)

After Ribbentrop had read the British government's reply to the German proposal to begin direct German-Polish negotiations on August 30 in the presence of Henderson and interpreter Schmidt, he had to conclude that the English response was unsatisfactory. For although point 7 of the note emphasized in many fine words the necessity of bringing about a German-Polish exchange of views "without delay," it simultaneously stated, in contradiction to this, that in the opinion of the British government it was "impracticable" to establish such contact "as of today." (DBFP VII,

No. 543; German-English Secret Connections, p. 474.) Shortly before, Halifax had described Germany's desire to establish contact with Poland on August 30 as "unreasonable" in his directive No. 504.

Henderson had also been instructed to raise two further points verbally after delivering the note. First, he was to point out "possible provocations by the German minority in Poland" — which did not exist — and second, explain that the British government was "not in a position to recommend to the Polish government" that it "agree to the procedure proposed by Germany." The German government should, Henderson explained, "set things in motion through normal diplomatic channels, i.e., by submitting its proposals to the Polish ambassador in Berlin." (Files VI, Doc. 461, Freund III, Doc. 135 a.) The British ambassador, who had worked until the last minute to secure Colonel Beck's visit to Berlin in order to resolve the contentious issues peacefully, now had the task of informing Ribbentrop that a Polish negotiator would not be coming at all. Finally, Henderson, who in his own words was not a "free agent," had to describe the German invitation to a Polish representative to come on August 30 as an "ultimatum," as he had already done to Hitler on August 29, even though the British government had itself demanded "immediate direct German-Polish negotiations" two days earlier. Before Ribbentrop began reading out the German proposals, Henderson asked, "with reference to the last paragraph of the German reply of the previous day, whether the German proposals had already been worked out and whether they could be handed over to him." (File VII, Doc. 461.) In doing so, the ambassador relied on his falsified English translation of the German reply to England dated August 29. Only according to this mistranslation would the British government have been entitled, as already explained, to receive the points for negotiation intended for Poland "before" rather than "by" the arrival of a Polish delegate. In his reply, Ribbentrop reproached the ambassador for the fact that the only result of the British

mediation so far was the Polish general mobilization, and rejected the assertion that the invitation of a Polish plenipotentiary for August 30 was an "ultimatum." The invitation was nothing more than a "declaration of war" by the two sides, given the presence of two armed armies within firing range.

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practical proposal dictated by the circumstances of the moment." Since nothing had been heard from Poland by midnight on the German side, the question of a possible proposal was no longer "topical." Ribbentrop then read out the German proposals verbatim and "explained them in detail." (Statement by Schmidt in Nuremberg.) He did this even though it was contrary to the instructions he had received from Hitler because he considered it necessary to inform the ambassador exactly what Germany would have proposed if the Polish representative had appeared.

Just as Henderson had resorted to "shouting" the evening before in his conversation with Hitler over a "minor point," he also attempted—presumably again on instructions—to provoke Ribbentrop during the midnight talks, this time over a passage that he claimed to have "misunderstood." The ambassador had asked to speak "German" that night, a language he did not fully master, and had not brought his own interpreter. (Schmidt, op. cit., p. 457; Ribbentrop, Deutsch-Englische Geheimverbindungen, op. cit., p. 489.)

By using the German language, Henderson wanted – or was supposed to – have an excuse in this critical confrontation for not having understood either the German proposals or Ribbentrop's explanation correctly. Henderson's two successive provocations against Hitler and Ribbentrop were closely related and were intended to prevent effective negotiations and hold Germany responsible for this. This British method of shifting the blame for an impending war, which Ribbentrop repeatedly pointed out in his London reports (A 5522 and "Conclusions"), was very successful in terms of propaganda at the time, but has since become a serious indictment of Chamberlain's policy due to the documents that have since been published. The British demand for direct and immediate German-Polish negotiations in Chamberlain's note of August 28 was only a pretense. Now the British government was trying at all costs to prevent the implementation of its own proposal. At the end of the midnight talks, which were nothing more than a farce on the part of the British to conceal Chamberlain's true intentions, Henderson suggested that "the Reich Foreign Minister should summon the Polish ambassador and hand him the Reich Government's proposals." This suggestion shows, on the one hand, that Henderson was well aware of the content of the Sixteen Points and wanted to see them communicated to the Polish government because of their reasonable nature, and on the other hand, that he was prepared to make concessions.

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On the other hand, he wanted to establish German-Polish contact by all means, contrary to the intentions of his own government. Henderson's proposal had no practical significance, because Lipski was not authorized to accept German proposals. This was expressly forbidden to him a few hours later by Colonel Beck, with the knowledge of the British government. (DBFP VH, No. 608.) Ribbentrop finally ended his conversation with Henderson by declaring that he would "reserve all decisions" for Hitler. (Files VII, Doc. 461.)

Following the midnight talks, Henderson informed the Polish ambassador Lipski of the content of these

proposals and urged him to report immediately to Ribbentrop to receive them. He could never have done this if, as he was forced to claim in his untruthful report, he had not understood the content of the proposals when Ribbentrop read them out. Henderson made a further effort and had Dahlerus and Ogilvie-Forbes translate and read the German sixteen points to the Polish ambassador on the morning of August 31. But Lipski, pale with excitement, could only stammer:

"He had no reason whatsoever to be interested in notes or offers from the German side. He knew the situation in Germany well after five and a half years as ambassador and had close ties to Göring and others in influential circles. Lipski declared that he was convinced that in the event of war, unrest would break out in this country and Polish troops would march successfully on Berlin." (Dahlerus, Der letzte Versuch, op. cit., p. 110.)

Even after the German-Russian pact, the Poles remained completely intransigent, thereby committing virtual suicide. Based on constant reports from England, Colonel Beck firmly expected a coup in Germany. After all, Chamberlain had sent him Kleist-Schmenzin's treacherous report (DBFP VII, No. 546) containing the most important secret military orders. Without the hope of Hitler's elimination, even the most insane and chauvinistic Pole would not have been so megalomaniacal as to believe that he could resist Germany and its ally Russia. Without the betrayal of the conspirators, the world war would not have broken out because of Poland.

"England shall remain firm."

Dr. Kordt had spoken with Foreign Office official Jebb on August 18. During their dinner for two, "after several old cognacs, Kordt became quite talkative." To sound him out, Jebb said that he "did not believe in war." Kordt immediately signaled to me and said that he completely agreed with me. In the course of the conversation, Kordt seemed to believe that Germany would not be prepared to compromise on the Polish question. (FO 371/22976, C 11748, signed Jebb, August 19, 1939.) That was the language of a conspirator.

Already on August 25, Dr. Schairer had telephoned from Zurich and informed London that, according to his information, Hitler was determined to attack Poland this weekend, Saturday night, instead of waiting until after the party convention, as he had originally intended. Dr. Schairer's friends in Germany say it is crucial to convince Hitler by every possible means that England will fight, because he still believes that England will do nothing at the last moment. (FO 371/22978, C 12230, signed Ashton-Gwatkin.) On August 26, Schairer was in London and saw Jebb at 1 p.m. on the 27th. Dr. Schairer was in contact with Dr. Goerdeler in Oslo, who had called him and told him "what he had heard from his friends in Berlin, the generals, about the situation:

1. The Rome-Berlin-Tokyo axis has completely broken down. 2. But Hitler still believes that England and France will not fight, and he assured his generals of this. 3. The generals say that if the Führer's information is correct, then everything is fine, but if it is not correct, then we have serious doubts that we can win the war. They have warned Hitler very clearly against fighting on two fronts under the current conditions, and it seems that their warning has been taken seriously this time. For the first time in recent months, the generals have now come forward again. 4. Hitler claims that Russia will supply large quantities of raw materials, but all rumors that Russia will provide military support are groundless. 5. The raw materials situation is desperate, and gasoline is only available for a few months. 6. England and France must remain firm under all circumstances, then Hitler will finally push for a

conference. Dr. Goerdeler believes that this is a good plan, but it is absolutely crucial that a conference be convened to deal with all issues, including disarmament, and not be focused on a single goal, such as German-Polish relations. (FO 371/22978, C 12211, signed Jebb, August 27, 1939.)

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The next day, August 28, 1939, a "first-class German source" informed London that "the German army would be ready to attack Poland on the night of Wednesday, August 30, to Thursday, August 31. The main attack on Warsaw will be led from East Prussia and Slovakia. Colonel Beck was immediately informed of this in strict confidence." (FO 371/22978, C 12234, signed Kirkpatrick, August 28, 1939.) On August 30, a Mr. Alla von Marx informed Jebb on behalf of the conspirators that the situation in Germany was very "calm." "We all hope that England will not give in, but will remain firm. All reports indicate that the regime will collapse if Hitler does not succeed with his blackmail. The population in Germany does not want to fight at the moment, and unrest is expected in all parts of the Reich, especially in the south, the Rhineland, and Austria." Gladwyn Jebb thanked him for this information with the words: "We have remained firm, but unfortunately there are no signs that the regime is collapsing." (FO 371/23010, C 13105, signed Frangois Rodd and Gladwyn Jebb, August 30 and September 2, 1939.) Rauschning also reappeared to inform the British of his views on further developments in Germany. It was completely wrong to believe that the German nation "stood united behind Hitler." He was convinced that in such a centralized state as modern Germany, "the entire administration would gradually be paralyzed." Kirkpatrick wrote that he had always been convinced that Germany could not contemplate a long war because morale was breaking down. (FO 371/23010.)

At the same time, Ashton-Gwatkin reported on talks with Dr. Schairer and Dr. Goerdeler, in which "advice was given to His Majesty's Government on how to respond to any ultimatum from Hitler." The most important point in the report, which "apparently originated from Goerdeler," is that

"As of today's date – August 29, 1939 – we have not heard of any action taken by the generals, except that General Halder and Admiral Raeder exerted pressure on Hitler on or around the 28th with regard to the risk of a two-front war, which they considered inevitable if Poland were attacked. On August 19, we heard from the Propaganda Ministry that the generals completely rejected war. As we learned on the 26th from various reliable sources, including one with the best connections to the German General Staff, the generals wanted to act on the 25th, but postponed it again to the 27th, and then postponed it again ...

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Hitler would probably like to give in, but can he? The answer lies with him alone and could become known at any moment. As for G. - Goerdeler - it is not known whether his assertions are well-founded. Perhaps they are just fantasies about what he would like to see happen. The independence of the generals may have been overestimated, even though they have recently acted as a brake. They are probably the only alternative to Hitler, but we have not yet received confirmation that their influence is very effective. We reported on "hesitation" in mid-July, and the M.1.5 information confirmed "cold feet." The hesitation was apparently only to be made known to a few at the top. Now we must wait and see whether Hitler can afford to hesitate. There were indeed delays from day to day, and it seems that the generals had a say in this. How great their influence on Hitler will ultimately be is very difficult to assess." (FO 371/22981, C 12878, August 29, 1939.)

On the same day, August 29, Ashton-Gwatkin sent another report on his conversation with Goerdeler, who was in Stockholm. The following record reflects Goerdeler's remarks to Schairer:

"1. It was not Göring who prevented the outbreak of war last Saturday, August 26, but the army generals who on Friday, August 25, presented Hitler with the critical questions: Italy, Japan, raw materials and government bonds, the attitude of England and Ribbentrop's assertion that England would not support Poland in the end. No satisfactory answer was found on these points, but the generals' main demand was to know whether Ribbentrop's assertion about England's attitude was correct.

2. This was the situation that prevented the outbreak of war on Saturday and 3. forced Hitler to send Sir Neville Henderson to clarify the issue. 4. Hitler's next move will be an ultimatum, and 5. every ultimatum is based on pressure and threats and should be rejected in the strongest terms. 6. At the same time, the British government should repeat Lord Halifax's offer of June—the Chatham House speech—when he proposed to solve the world's problems by peaceful means. 7. The German government never responded to this offer, which was ridiculed in the German press, but it made a deep impression on the army generals. 8. This dual basis of policy should be made clear. It must be emphasized that England and France have repeatedly made several proposals for a peaceful settlement, and the general peace plan should be explained again in more detail—i.e., colonies, raw materials, and living space by the British and French governments. 9. But it should be made clear that in the event of military threats, these proposals would be null and void and would most certainly not be repeated. 10. It must be made very clear to Hitler that if he rejects these proposals and thus rejects the chance of a

peaceful solution, with full responsibility falling on him and the decision to be made on the battlefield. 11. It is not too late. 12. The war has not yet begun. 13. They will withdraw. 14. It must be clearly stated that England will not negotiate under the threat of an ultimatum. 15. However, if a period of calm can be achieved, it will be possible to negotiate all issues and reach a peaceful solution for all. 16. But all issues must be discussed simultaneously. 17. And there is only one goal for all—lasting peace. 18. If England does not agree to this, the responsibility will fall on England. 19. If such steps are taken, i.e., in Germany, I believe that the danger of war will no longer exist, because there is great anxiety in Germany. 20. But England must take steps to lay the foundations on which the future world order can be built.

I – Schairer – spoke to Goerdeler a minute ago. I told him that the business situation here was very good, but that we could not conclude negotiations satisfactorily until there had been a change of directors on the other side. Goerdeler said that this was impossible at the moment. He repeated two or three times that the initiative must come from our side. I – Schairer – said that I would report this to my directors. What he means by initiative is explained above (putsch).

Comments on the above: Goerdeler is obviously an honest man. He is a German patriot. He is not an agent provocateur. He represents the ideas and policies of the General Staff. I asked Schairer if he didn't think that smacked of Bendlerstrasse, and he agreed completely. This connection gave him the freedom to travel, etc., which made him suspicious in some circles here. But the explanation seems clear enough to me, because even under Hitler, the General Staff and the generals enjoy great independence and respect. It is a world that the Nazis have not conquered and cannot conquer. It is the strongest intellectual and traditional power in Germany. This is what has sustained Germany through

the terrible postwar years. This is what will enable Germany to survive the madness of the Nazis. This intellectual attitude of the General Staff and the generals is the only alternative to Hitler. It is the last force in Germany.

We must heed Goerdeler's appeal: Goerdeler told me last Pentecost that the generals would take action against Hitler at the appropriate time. He told me that when mobilization was ordered, the generals would gain partial control of the state, i.e., the Foreign Office archives, and would be given the right to ask questions about the same issues. (See point 1.), i.e., the claim that the generals prevented the outbreak of war on August 25. They would then have 48 hours, beginning last Friday, to decide for themselves whether war should come or not. Goerdeler told me last Pentecost that there would be no war. He also told me that they would then take action against Hitler in response to my question about the change in the dictatorship. But

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This does not seem to be happening yet. It seems clear to me that something changed in Germany at the end of last week. The power that led directly to war has faltered. Hitler is no longer the only person who counts in Germany. Even Hitler cannot wage war without the consent of the generals. It seems clear to me that this approval was not given last week. This explains the change in plans. This is consistent with the attitude of the generals in earlier crises of the Nazi adventure. It coincides with Göring's statement. It is the most important factor in Germany today, I believe. It is a factor that strives for the good." (FO 371/22981, signed Ashton-Gwatkins, August 29, 1939.)

On August 25, it was not the generals, neither the loyal ones nor those from the circle of conspirators, who caused Hitler to withdraw his order to march, but Ribbentrop immediately after his return from Moscow, because he remained convinced, after learning of the Hitler-Chamberlain correspondence, that England would intervene.

Goerdeler's report is a renewed urgent appeal to the British government not to negotiate with Hitler. The German generals are portrayed as strong, although they had nothing to do with the stop order forced by Ribbentrop. As Ribbentrop writes, the military saw the Chancellor's actions as a weakness and made Hitler feel this. Hitler, in turn, blamed Ribbentrop for his generals' criticism and therefore excluded him from the German-British talks on August 26 until the British note arrived on the evening of August 28. In typical agent language, Goerdeler describes the impending coup as a "change of directors"! However, he had little confidence in the initiative of the German conspirators, repeating several times that "the impetus for the coup must come from the English side." To give the General Staff more prestige in the eyes of the English, Goerdeler claimed that Göring "represented" its policy. This was to make it easier for the British to force the outbreak of war and provide the impetus for Hitler's removal. However, London did not want to bear this responsibility alone and therefore suggested that the conspirators be kept informed at the appropriate time so that they would have at least "48 hours to decide whether war should come or not." In fact, London followed Goerdeler's suggestions and sent secret messages to the German conspirators on September 1 and 2, referring to them as "certain sources." (DBFP VII, No. 732 and 735, German-English Secret Connections, p. 562.)

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Ribbentrop's renewed attack on British obstructionism

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Mussolini's mediation proposals and England's struggle for Italy

On the morning of August 31, 1939, Mussolini demanded that the British government "insist" that the Polish ambassador in Berlin "negotiate."

This was rejected rather rudely by Chamberlain, even though he had demanded precisely this procedure from the German government just a few hours earlier. Colonel Beck and Lipski were therefore acting solely under pressure from the British government. England denied Warsaw's obstructive attitude and informed the Polish government of Kleist-Schmenzin's secret information of August 30 in order to strengthen Poland in its resistance to Germany's desire for negotiations.

After Hitler had announced Germany's sixteen points for negotiation to Poland via radio at 9 p.m. on August 31, the Polish government rejected Germany's moderate offer with derision via the Warsaw radio station and called for arms. This was followed by the invasion of Polish territory by German troops in the early morning of September 1, 1939.

Mussolini's efforts to convene an armistice and peace conference for September 5 even after the outbreak of military conflict are also well known. Germany and France accepted this proposal. Only England made the new demand that German troops must first withdraw from Poland. The secret behind this British behavior was Chamberlain's waiting for the coup and the British hope for a change in Italy's position.

Sir Percy Loraine, the British ambassador in Rome, had been asked by the Foreign Office on August 25 whether he thought it possible for Italy to break away from the Axis. Loraine replied that Mussolini had told him quite openly on July 7 that if England fought on the Polish side, Italy would be on the German side. He considered it wrong to ask Italy such a question at this point. Mussolini would only break with the Axis for domestic political reasons, perhaps to preserve the fascist regime. Loraine preferred to propose cooperation to the Duce and emphasize his importance as a peacemaker.

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factor." (FO 371/22977, C 12007, 12065, 25 + 26 August 1939.)

The Italian military attaché in London issued the following personal statement:

"Should England and France localize the conflict by limiting their support to Poland to the delivery of aircraft—since troops and weapons have been proven unable to reach Poland—Italy would in all probability remain neutral.

However, if France were to begin supporting Poland with large-scale bombing raids on Germany, Italy would without hesitation side with Germany, and would do so 'because neutral

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never received anything from the victors'.

The Foreign Office interpreted this message to mean that Italy might once again "defect," as it had in 1915, or remain neutral. However, the Italian military attaché remained convinced that "the democracies have become extremely weak militarily since the Moscow Pact. They can no longer starve Germany into submission in six months.... The British blockade would not bring England victory ... With regard to Poland, the Italian military attaché said that the German General Staff would have to take into account the intervention of 'General Winter' at the end of September and therefore could not wait long for negotiations." The letter expressly requested that the source of this purely private conversation not be disclosed. (FO 371/22978, C 12213, August 27, 1939.)

On the same day, Percy Loraine was able to report to London that "Count Ciano and Senior Mussolini were quite prepared to cooperate with us in finding a peaceful solution." Lord Halifax told Ciano to pass on to Mussolini "that we will certainly not refuse to discuss with Germany and at the same time make our position on Poland quite clear. He repeated that we will not contradict a smooth denial." (FO 371/22978, C 1216, August 27, 1939.)

On September 1, Percy Loraine was finally able to report that Italy would fight on the German side. (Forwarded to Tokyo. FO 371/22980, C 1265, September 1, 1939.)

Chamberlain's speech on September 1, 1939

On the evening of September 1, the British Prime Minister said the following about the German-Polish agreement, which would have been so easy to reach:

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On September 1, he gave a propaganda speech in the House of Commons in which he completely misrepresented the events of the previous days. He focused primarily on Germany's expectation that a Polish plenipotentiary would arrive in Berlin on August 30, as well as on the midnight talks between Ribbentrop and Henderson, and made the following statement regarding the sixteen points offered by Germany to Poland:

"Right at the outset, I must say that Germany never communicated the text of these proposals to Poland. The facts are as follows. On Tuesday, August 29, in response to a note sent by us, the German government stated, among other things, that it would immediately submit proposals for a solution, if possible before the arrival of the Polish negotiator of the British government.... In the meantime, we naturally waited for these proposals. The next evening, when our ambassador called on Mr. von Ribbentrop, he urged him to summon the Polish ambassador and hand him the proposals for forwarding to his government, if they were ready, since we had heard nothing more about them. According to our ambassador, Mr. von Ribbentrop then declared in the strongest terms that he would never ask the ambassador to visit him. He hinted that it might be different if the Polish ambassador asked him for a meeting.... It is therefore clear that Germany is claiming the right to treat Poland as a power in the wrong because, until Wednesday night, it had not agreed to talks with Germany on a series of proposals of which it had never heard anything... And now us? On that Wednesday night I just mentioned, Mr. von Ribbentrop pulled out a long document during the conversation, which he read aloud in German at top speed. Of course, after this reading, our ambassador asked for a copy of the document, but the

answer was that it was too late now, as the Polish representative had not arrived in Berlin by midnight. And so, Mr. President, we never received a copy of these proposals, and we heard them for the first time last night on the radio... The legitimate course of action, in our opinion—in all of our opinions—would have been for these proposals to be presented to the Poles... Only yesterday evening did the Polish ambassador see the Reich Foreign Minister, Mr. von Ribbentrop. He once again explained to him what the Polish government had already said publicly, namely that it was willing to negotiate with Germany on the disputed points on the basis of equality. What was the German government's response? The answer was that without another word, troops crossed the Polish border at dawn today... (British Blue Book, No. 105, authorised by the British government, unabridged and unaltered translation of the original English edition, Basel 1939.)

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This short excerpt from Chamberlain's speech alone is full of untruths. First of all, it should be noted that

1. that Henderson did not speak to Ribbentrop on August 30, but only after midnight, i.e., in the early hours of August 31, on the express instructions of the British government.

2. When Chamberlain goes on to claim in his speech that the British government never received a copy of the German sixteen points and only learned of their contents for the first time on the evening of August 31 via radio broadcast, this is the height of falsification. For it can be seen from the English documents that the British government had already been informed on August 30 of the German proposals for negotiations with Poland by Chamberlain's confidant Dahlerus. Early in the morning of August 31, Göring, the second most powerful man in the state, sent the exact wording of the proposals in writing to British Ambassador Henderson, the official representative of the Chamberlain government, again through Dahlerus. Henderson sent the original German text to London early that morning and followed it with his own English translation, in which, as is well known, the last paragraph was mistranslated, i.e., "until" was translated as "before" the arrival of a Polish plenipotentiary. In addition, the ambassador authorized his embassy counselor and the Swede to go to the Polish embassy that same morning to prepare a translation of the German Sixteen Points for Lipski, the representative of the Polish government, and to read it to the Polish ambassador. We know all this from official British documents and Dahlerus' writings. This proves that

3. Chamberlain's further assertion that Poland had "never heard anything" about the German proposals is also untrue! Moreover, with Chamberlain's knowledge, Ambassador Lipski had been forbidden on August 30 to mention the German proposals during his conversation with Ribbentrop, let alone accept them.

4. Chamberlain also contradicts the truth with his further assertion that Ribbentrop read the proposals to Henderson "at top speed" and that Henderson asked for a copy of the document after it had been read. The truth is that the reading took place normally with additional explanations, as the interpreter Schmidt testified in Nuremberg, and that Henderson only asked for a copy of the document before the reading.

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He expressed his wish to be provided with a copy of the proposals, but did not repeat this wish after they had been read out. (German minutes.)

5. Chamberlain also completely misrepresented Ribbentrop's allegedly vehement statement regarding the immediate recall of the Polish ambassador. Ribbentrop did not reject Henderson's proposal, but stated that he would "leave all decisions to the Führer" and added that Lipski's visit would only serve a purpose if he had full negotiating powers or was at least authorized to accept the German proposals. However, it became clear just a few hours later that Henderson's proposal was pointless. "For when Lipski appeared before the German Foreign Minister at 6:30 p.m. on August 31, he had to declare, in accordance with his instructions and with the knowledge of the British government, that he was not authorized to negotiate or to accept German proposals.

6. Chamberlain, however, announced to the House of Commons and the world public on the evening of September 1 that the Polish ambassador had "only yesterday evening" declared to the German foreign minister that Poland was ready to negotiate, which is a pure fabrication.

7. Chamberlain added another untruth to this by claiming that the German troops had then "without another word crossed the Polish border at dawn today." Contrary to Chamberlain's assertion, however, a great many words had been exchanged between the Ribbentrop-Lipski talks and the invasion of German troops into Poland. The German government had announced its proposals for negotiations to Poland by radio at 9 p.m. on the evening of August 31. But instead of seizing this last chance to establish negotiations, Poland rejected the German proposals for negotiations in the harshest terms at 11 p.m. on Warsaw radio and called for arms.

8. The grossest falsification in Chamberlain's speech is his assertion that the German government had agreed to make its proposals for Poland "available, if possible, before the arrival of the Polish negotiator of the British government." This is why Henderson had to produce his false translation so that Chamberlain could use it in his speech. The original German text, on the other hand, states that the British government would, "if possible, also by the arrival" of a Polish negotiator, make its proposals available to the Polish government.

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authorized representatives be informed of the German proposals to Warsaw, Henderson was not allowed to arrive in London until September 2, i.e., after Chamberlain's speech. The word "also," which Chamberlain omitted, shows that the German government was primarily concerned with informing the Polish government of its offer to negotiate. With his falsification, Chamberlain accused Germany of breaking its word and at the same time deceived the British Parliament and the world public. It reveals the British method repeatedly emphasized by Ribbentrop of shifting the blame for an impending war onto the enemy by any means possible, even if England itself was forcing it.

One last important point immediately catches the eye. Even in his speech on September 1, 1939, Chamberlain was still following the instructions of the German conspirators. Before the world public, he made Ribbentrop the target of his mendacious accusations. In doing so, he was following advice given by Weizsäcker to Jan Colvin in July 1939. According to this advice, British propaganda should focus on Ribbentrop in order to discredit him, cause a rift in the German government, and thus trigger a "landslide" in the Reich.

Ribbentrop sends Dr. Hesse to Sir Horace Wilson again
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While the German conspirators relentlessly urged London to remain firm in its stance toward Germany, Ribbentrop, with Hitler's consent, intervened once again via Dr. Fritz Hesse to prevent the outbreak of a German-English war, which he considered inevitable as a consequence of the German-Polish conflict.

When no Polish plenipotentiary had arrived in Berlin by August 31 to respond to the German offer of negotiations, Ribbentrop sent press attaché Dr. Hesse to London before the German-Polish military clash to be ready for any eventuality.

After the German-Polish conflict broke out, Ribbentrop sat down shortly after 8 p.m. on September 2 to make a telephone call.

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nish, connected with Hesse, but without mentioning his name:

"You know who is speaking; please do not mention my name. Please go immediately to your representative—you know who I mean—and explain the following to him: The Führer is prepared to withdraw from Poland and offer compensation for the damage already done, on condition that we receive Danzig and the road through the corridor, if England takes over mediation in the German-Polish conflict. You are authorized by the Führer to submit this proposal to the English cabinet and to begin negotiations on this matter immediately. Emphasize once again that you are acting on Hitler's express instructions and that this is not a private initiative on my part, so that there can be no misunderstanding in this matter." (Fritz Hesse, "Das Spiel um Deutschland" [The Game for Germany], p. 210.)

Sir Horace Wilson made the following note about his conversation with Hesse: "Copy 10, Downing Street, Whitehall

Hesse (who left Berlin before the events of Thursday) was instructed by Ribbentrop shortly after 8 p.m. to contact me to inquire whether the British government would be prepared to authorize me to travel secretly to Berlin to meet him and Hitler. I saw him—Hesse—at about 10 p.m. and asked him the purpose of the conversation. The answer I received was—to discuss the whole situation, man to man, including the Polish question.

I told Hesse that the British view had been expressed in the Prime Minister's statement in the House of Commons and that I would ask him to tell Ribbentrop that His Majesty's Government was not prepared under any circumstances to enter into any talks with the German Government until the German troops had been withdrawn and the status quo restored. After that, the position would be as expressed in the German-English exchange of notes just published.

(Signed) H.J.W. 2.9.39" (FO 371/22982/C 13080/15/18 B)

This record of the conversation, compiled by Horace Wilson, was commented on by the Permanent Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign Office, Sir Alexander Cadogan:

"You seem to have given the right answer, which we must stick to. These attempts at indirect contact actually reassure me greatly. The Germans must be feeling the draught."

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In his conversation with Hesse, Wilson laid England's cards on the table. Using words that had already appeared in Ribbentrop's main report A 5522 and the "Conclusions," Chamberlain's alter ego stated: "England cannot allow another power to dominate the continent without perishing or destroying the foundations on which its empire and prestige are based. We fought Napoleon for 22 years, we will fight Hitler and Germany for 100 years if necessary..." Horace Wilson himself did not believe his bombastic words, for he was convinced that the conspirators would put their coup plans into action in a very short time, eliminate Hitler, and stop the war. England would therefore not need to fight Hitler's Germany for 100 years.

When Dr. Fritz Hesse published the conversations he had conducted with Sir Horace Wilson on Ribbentrop's behalf in 1954, his account was met with widespread disbelief and indignation. In a review of Hesse's book Das Spiel um Deutschland (The Game for Germany), under the heading "Legends about Hitler's Foreign Policy," Helmut Krausnick, court historian at the Institute for Contemporary History, commented ironically:

"Hesse's sensational 'assignment' can therefore, at best, be regarded as an exaggerated deception; indeed, it will have to be relegated to the realm of fables until better witnesses can be found to corroborate its credibility." (Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte, 2nd year, 1954, p. 238.)

This sensational assignment given to Hesse by Ribbentrop would probably have remained "in the realm of myth" if Wilson's notes of the conversation had not been filed in the British Cabinet Office archives and forwarded to the Foreign Office Library on January 23, 1963. After the British files were made available to historians in 1969, this document turned up during a review of unpublished material in a volume where, according to the usual British filing system, it should not have been. It was found as a document that had been added later to the Dahleru papers. This is also a method of hiding important historical material, as was done with Ribbentrop's memorandum "London A 5522."

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Deadline and ultimatum

The outbreak of war

On September 2, 1939, Halifax, acting on Chamberlain's behalf, addressed the well-known "certain circles" in Berlin for the second time in three days, informing them in advance that an ultimatum would now be issued to the German government. The instructions to Henderson read as follows:

"You do not need to inform the German government of this, but you can pass it on immediately to certain circles in order to allow them as much time as possible to respond." (DBFP VII, No. 735.)

The "response" expected from London was the initiation of the promised coup in Germany, which Chamberlain hoped for on the night of September 3 and which would have spared him his precarious declaration of war on Germany. But the German traitors remained inactive, as Henderson had always warned. As the best expert on the internal German situation, he was convinced that the conspirators first wanted to take possession of the corridor that Hitler had renounced. At least, that was what Kleist-Schmenzin had already told Churchill in 1938.

At 9 a.m. on September 3, Henderson presented the Reich government with an ultimatum, giving it two hours to withdraw its troops from Poland. A quarter of an hour later, Chamberlain addressed the House of Commons and announced to the world that "the German leaders cannot be trusted" and that the situation had therefore become "intolerable." Immediately after 11 a.m., he announced on the radio that Great Britain was at war with Germany because the Reich government had not responded to the note before 11 a.m. (Deutsch-Englische Geheimverbindungen, p. 566.) In a private letter dated September 10, 1939, however, he freely admitted that he was "convinced that Hitler had seriously wanted a settlement with us and had worked seriously on his proposals, which were later made public on the radio." (Feiling, p. 417.) Now, on September 3, 1939, Chamberlain had the outbreak of war he had been working toward for so long. But the conspirators did not step in to prevent the real war. Chamberlain's trump card did not work.

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President Moscicki: "England prevented us from accepting German proposals."

Initially, Poland was the main victim of Chamberlain's rigid policy, which was aimed solely at breaking the internal German front. Warsaw's statesmen believed that with the promised military support of France and Great Britain and, above all, the "binding promise" of a coup in Germany, the Polish army would be able to march on Berlin. Because Colonel Beck was blinded by Chamberlain's massive pressure regarding the real situation in Germany, he refused to negotiate with Berlin until the very end and allowed war to break out, firmly convinced that Poland would not really have to fight if Hitler was eliminated and that it would be able to annex German territories without a fight.

There are revealing documents, taken from German files captured in the US, about the terrible tragedy that Poland had to endure just a few days later. One of them deals with the Polish situation in September 1939, shortly after the outbreak of war. It states, among other things:

"After Poland's defeat in September 1939, Marshal Rydz-Smigly told Romanian dignitaries that, just two days after the start of the war, the Polish High Command had lost contact with the individually operating armies due to the actions of the German Air Force... England, however, had officially informed the Polish government that 1,500 English aircraft were on their way to Poland. None of them had arrived, however... Furthermore, the Western powers had given assurances that the French had broken through the Siegfried Line in two places and had penetrated deep into German territory... Rydz-Smigly explained excitedly that they had relied on the official communications and promises of assistance from the British. Particularly bitter was the remark by President Moscicki that Poland had ultimately wanted to accept Germany's terms but had been prevented from doing so by England. Because his ministers had counted on British assistance, they had ultimately allowed war to break out." (M. Sp.; No. 1585. Microfilm T120. 1496, frame 626334, England Volumes 2 and 3 for the period

January 7, 1933, to July 30, 1940.)

This report, which originated in Romania, appeared in the DNB Foreign Service. After it was questioned by the papal organ "Osservatore Romano" on September 26, 1939, it was published by

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the Foreign Office of the German Embassy in Rome on October 23, 1939, issued the following statement: "The statements made by Moscicki and Rydz-Smigly are authentic. Date, circumstances

the meeting. The names of the Orthodox Metropolitan and the interpreting priest are known. Schmidt." (A 659, No. 119.)

The statements made by Moscicki and Rydz-Smigly have now been confirmed as authentic by the former head of the press department at the Foreign Office. The document provides a truthful picture of Anglo-Polish relations before and after the outbreak of the German-Polish war. The Polish president fully confirms the account that emerges from the British documents cited earlier, namely that Poland was prevented by England from accepting the German proposals and, trusting in English help, ultimately allowed the war to break out. Rydz-Smigly rightly complains that England did not keep its promises of immediate military assistance, to which it was bound under the British-Polish Guarantee Treaty. When the Polish commander-in-chief Moscicki refers in this context to the "official communications" from the English, on which Poland had also relied in vain, he is referring to the content of the Kleist-Schmenzin secret report on the allegedly hopeless internal situation in Germany, which was officially conveyed to Colonel Beck by Halifax on the afternoon of August 31. Thus, the attitude of the German conspirators finally caused Poland, which had been wavering until the end, to reject a peaceful solution and decide in favor of war.

It is Poland's tragedy that the Chamberlain government lacked men like Sir Robert Peel, who in 1850 opposed Lord Palmerston's inclination to interfere in the affairs of other nations. Peel called out to the then British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in the House of Commons: "May the time never come when, alarmed by your own interference, you withdraw your support from those whom you have incited, leaving them with the bitter realization that you have betrayed them!"

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Everything is waiting for the coup

Gamelin: "On the day France declares war, Hitler will be overthrown."

In an unpublished study entitled "La Cuisine Au Beurre" ("Butter Soft Through Betrayal"), Benoist-Méchine reports on a conversation he had with the head of the French General Staff, General Gamelin, a few days before the Anglo-French declaration of war in August 1939. Benoist-Mechin had just completed a trip through Germany and formed an impression of the mood in the Reich. Nowhere had he heard a hostile word against France or a war song, nor had he heard any criticism of the Reich government. To his surprise, however, General Gamelin informed him of the opposite, i.e., of the "great dissatisfaction" in Germany with regard to Hitler. Gamelin had wanted to speak to Benoist-Mechin to hear his views on the German troops and generals, as he had written a book on "The History

of the German Army." Gamelin wanted to know how many divisions the Germans had. However, since Benoist-Mechin was unable to answer this question because he had already completed his work in 1936, Gamelin said, to the astonishment of his interlocutor: "Whether the Wehrmacht has 20, 100 or 200 divisions is irrelevant, because if we declare war on Hitler, I will probably never have anything to do with the German army." He added by way of explanation: "On the day we declare war on Germany, Hitler will be overthrown! Unrest will break out in Berlin. Instead of defending the Reich's borders, the German army will flood back to the capital to restore order. The troops stationed in the western fortresses will offer little resistance. Then we will invade Germany as easily and quickly as a knife cuts through butter."

Gamelin mocked Guderian's book "Die Panzerwaffe" (The Armored Weapon), which he had not read, but Benoist-Mechin had. The thesis of the German general, whom Benoist-Mechin knew personally, was "go big or go home." Guderian wanted to deploy large masses of tanks to the same spot on the front if necessary. Gamelin considered this foolishness, which he himself would never have

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would defeat them. Furthermore, it was irrelevant whether France had an armored army or not. "For events will unfold according to a completely different plan. At the first cannon shot, the Hitler regime will collapse, and we will invade Germany 'like butter, yes, like butter'!" That was the French generalissimo's prediction for the coming war, which England and France declared only because they considered "betrayed Germany to be as soft as butter." Gamelin repeated his "butter formulation" several times, giving Benoist-Mechin the impression that the French chief of staff could not find a better comparison.

Finally, Gamelin handed his interlocutor two secret reports that were intended to convince him. The first dealt with the "great dissatisfaction" of the Hamburg workers and the Baden peasants. In Lörrach, posters had already been put up during the night of August 28-29 with the inscription: "Down with Hitler!" There was talk of "conspiracies" and people were convinced that Hitler had already lost the "war of nerves." The second document is an almost verbatim reproduction of the secret report known to us, which Kleist-Schmenzin delivered to the British Embassy in Berlin at 2 a.m. on August 30, at the time when the Reich government was still awaiting the arrival of a Polish plenipotentiary. The German conspiracy circle had informed the British government that the Westwall was not strong everywhere and that the "weak points were located between Freiburg, Saarbrücken, and Aachen." Finally, it stated, among other things: "If the General Staff knew that an attack on the Westwall was certain, it would strengthen its position!" Then Hitler would be removed by the German generals on the grounds of an alleged "nervous breakdown."

Gamelin actually believed that this secret report reflected the real situation in Germany and that France would not have to fight. The Germans themselves would ensure that Hitler's empire was brought down. Gamelin apparently did not know that the author of this secret information was Kleist-Schmenzin, whom the British had known as a German traitor since August 1938. (DBFP II, p. 684ff. No.; D.-E. p. 65ff.) Nevertheless, Chamberlain placed his complete trust in this man, prevented Germany from making contact with Poland for another two days, then decided to declare war on Germany and forced France to do the same. For he had learned from Kleist-Schmenzin's secret report, which had also been sent to Colonel Beck, that

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was able to convince his two allies that the war would not take place. Gamelin made such a rash judgment because the French government had also been receiving information from high-ranking German conspirators.

On March 29, 1939, Rauschning had written a note that was found in the files of the French Supreme War Council. It states, among other things:

"To avoid a new war, one must make use of the strong anti-National Socialist forces in Germany. This opposition can be activated by the Western powers' ultimate demand that Germany must evacuate Czechoslovakia ... Should Germany's situation improve as a result of the economic exploitation of Romania and Hungary, the German conspiracy circle would be condemned to powerlessness. (The original text naturally refers to "German opposition.") Hitler must be prevented from securing the neutrality of the Eastern European states." (Documentary evidence of the influence of Rauschning and Gebauer on the French government, November 3, 1940. T 120, 733, 285, p. 235 ff.)

On March 27, 1939, Rauschning reported:

"The German economy is facing disaster. There is an increase in sabotage and passive resistance... Hitler's socialism is more dangerous than Marxism. Private initiative and property are now nothing but fiction. The National Socialist revolution can only be stopped by destroying the regime.

Please ask the Pope to intervene with the King of Italy and the Crown Prince to influence Mussolini accordingly. Hope that the papal intervention will support the internal German opposition."

Notes by Professor Schairer in London, who was previously in Berlin:

"In order to secure peace with the help of the German people, the democracies must oppose the policies of the Third Reich. Therefore, the following is necessary: Withdrawal of diplomatic representatives from the Reich. No more congratulatory telegrams to Hitler. Prevention of the export of raw materials important for the war effort to Germany. Implementation of these plans energetically but secretly. It is possible that Mussolini is seeking contact with the Western powers. This must be rejected, but at the same time the King of Italy must be informed that this position will change as soon as the King and the Italian people have given the appropriate guarantees for a lasting peace. Should Mussolini attempt a coup against the Western powers, the German General Staff will prevent Hitler from following Mussolini." (Ibid.)

On June 10, 1939, the Secretary General of the Quai d'Orsay, Alexis Leger, had declared to Nuncio Val£rie in Paris:

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"The internal situation in Germany is deteriorating day by day, and in physical terms, a poorly nourished and unhealthy generation is growing up in Germany." (Vatican Documents Volume I, Doc. No. 59, p. 59.)

On June 30, 1939, Bullitt had a conversation with the French Secretary of State in the Foreign Ministry, Alexis L&ger. During this conversation, Löger said he was convinced "that the Reichswehr now

wanted war to break out, solely for the strange reason that it had become convinced that the Hitler regime was intolerable and that it wanted to seize power in the Reich in order to oust Hitler." (US Foreign Relations 1939, Vol. I, p. 280.)

The former French Foreign Minister Bonnet also provides a very revealing account of the mood that prevailed in France in August 1939 in his memoirs:

"People were counting on an easy and quick victory, hoping for an imminent assassination attempt that was already being prepared and would bring down National Socialism... Just as in 1938, we were constantly told this in the last week before the war and asked to 'hold out, and the German generals will overthrow Hitler!'" (Bonnet, p. 307; m. Sp.)

Bonnet is obviously referring here to Kleist-Schmenzin's visit to London on August 18 and 19 and to Weizsäcker's secret message to Halifax on September 7 of the same year, and finally to Kleist-Schmenzin's last secret report against Germany dated August 30, 1939. Bonnet was also convinced, as another passage in his book shows, that England and France's

"declared war on September 3, 1939, would pave the way for the military coup that had been so solemnly announced to us."

"declared war on Germany on September 3, 1939, would pave the way for the military coup that had been so solemnly announced to us."

One of his colleagues even told him at the time that "Hitler and his government will be overthrown before a month has passed." As a result of a telephone message transmitted from London on September 6, 1939, people in Paris firmly believed that "the morale of the German population is as low as it was in November 1917, even 1918!" Allegedly, there was a shortage of "iron and copper" in Germany, and the miners were engaging in "passive resistance." The "Siegfried Line was poorly designed and poorly constructed," and so on. Based on this news, Bonnet continues, "people in France liked to convince themselves that the Maginot Line was only

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I need to wait calmly for Hitler's certain downfall." Bonnet goes on to write about some German generals:

"At the Nuremberg trials, they described in incredible detail what they had planned against the Führer and—one wonders why—had not carried out...

In the same way and with the same precision, military conspiracies against the Führer were announced to us in 1939 and 1940, before and after our defeat. Hitler nevertheless lived until 1945!" (Bonnet, p. 307; m. Sp.)

One year after the outbreak of war, on August 23, 1940, the German ambassador in Paris, Otto Abetz, telegraphed the Foreign Office that Bonnet, who had resigned as foreign minister in 1939, had made the following "interesting statement" to him "for the purpose of assessing France's responsibility for the war":

"One year ago today, a meeting took place between senior officials of the Quai d'Orsay and the French general staff. At this meeting on August 23, 1939, he—Bonnet—had advised that Poland be persuaded to adopt a conciliatory attitude toward Germany and had recommended the cession of Danzig, the Corridor, and Upper Silesia as a basis for negotiations with Germany. General Gamelin and the other leading military figures, in contrast to their attitude during the September crisis of 1938, took the view that one should not shy away from going to war because the military and international situation of the Reich did not deserve the favorable assessment that Bonnet gave it. In this context, there was information from a reliable source that General Georges, the French deputy chief of staff, who was otherwise considered level-headed, believed an agent's report received on August 30, 1939, according to which a "revolt" had been observed in the "Prussian" (!) officer corps in connection with the military preparations against Poland. (File X, Doc. 380; m. Sp. - This document lacks the note that it was submitted to Hitler or Ribbentrop.)

This report on the meeting at the Quai d'Orsay in the decisive days of August 1939 is a valuable contribution to the prehistory of the Second World War.

This report on the meeting at the Quai d'Orsay in the decisive days of August 1939 is a valuable contribution to the prehistory of the Second World War. It is noteworthy, first of all, that what the French foreign minister was prepared to concede to settle the German-Polish conflict—Danzig, the corridor in its entirety and without a vote, as well as Eastern Upper Silesia—went considerably beyond what Germany had proposed to Poland in its offer for negotiations. Then there is the striking enthusiasm for war among the otherwise very cautious French generals, who in 1938 had spoken out most vigorously against the outbreak of a military conflict.

but now, in 1939, he was willing to risk war. Bonnet then refers to information from a "reliable source" dated August 30, 1939, that a "revolt" had already broken out among German officers in the course of military preparations against Poland. There is no doubt that this information from a reliable source refers to Kleist-Schmenzin's secret message to the British Embassy in Berlin on the morning of August 30. In France, too, the German traitors' portrayal of the allegedly desperate internal situation in Germany played a disastrous role.

The publication of information from within the circle of conspirators themselves and the announcements in British documents make it clear that England and France would not have allowed war to break out if they had not been firmly convinced at the end of August 1939 that a "revolt" by the German officer corps was imminent.

From the English point of view, it is difficult to understand why, soon after the end of the war, many documents were published that reveal the close cooperation between the British government and the German conspirators. Today, it is said that the officials responsible for these measures were strong opponents of Prime Minister Chamberlain.

Roosevelt also expected the coup

The conspirators' connections went far beyond the secret ties between Germany and England. Even the Roosevelt administration seems to have speculated until the summer of 1940 that the Nazi government would collapse from within. It was only with Germany's victory over France that these hopes were

dashed in Washington. Roosevelt's actual war policy began at this moment. This explains the sabotage of Hitler's "peace feelers." These efforts had to be sabotaged at all costs, because successful negotiations would have catapulted the Reich Chancellor's prestige to new heights—and thus prevented the hoped-for collapse of Germany.

On June 16, 1939, the American ambassador in London, Joseph Kennedy, spoke with the Polish trade attaché Jan Wzelaki, about which the following record exists: "Kennedy spoke with a certain contempt about the optimists who

believed that Germany could be easily and quickly defeated because they speculated on a rapid overthrow in Germany." (German White Paper, p. 70£.) Kennedy also seems to have had a fairly good and comprehensive insight into the activities of the conspiratorial circles. He was also informed about Trott's trip to Solz in early June 1939 and his talks with Lothian, Chamberlain, and Halifax. In certain circles in London, the conspirators' activities were an open secret.

On August 31, 1939, the American chargé d'affaires in Berlin, Alexander C. Kirk, wrote to Secretary of State Cordell Hull: The German people were not only alarmed by the Hitler-Stalin pact, which they could not "digest" as a logical development of National Socialist policy, but also by the introduction of food ration cards. Kirk, who had only been in Berlin since April and had previously been in Moscow, had quickly gained access to the circle of conspirators, with the difference from other observers that he did not share their optimistic expectations. He warned against the false assumption that in Germany "the existing destructive influences had actually already successfully undermined the discipline of the regime... The Reich was not threatened by imminent collapse. It would be dangerous and misleading to attach greater importance to these undermining influences. Waiting for Germany's internal collapse would be in vain." (FRUS 1939, Vol. I, p. 395.)

On April 20, 1940, Morgenthau sent a situation report to Roosevelt. Morgenthau had received this "confidential report" from Edwin L. James, a senior executive at the New York Times, via Arthur Sulzberger. This long letter states that "respectable and highly placed Germans would rather accept defeat with all its consequences than the continuation of the present regime ... The army is still the hope of the moderate and conservative elements in Germany because it is the only organization capable of holding things together when the regime collapses. But the former hope that the army will take this course on its own initiative has become very weak... However, the generals assure their conservative friends that they will be on the right side when and if the time comes." This confidential report is signed "Your correspondent." (Roosevelt Estate, Hyde Park, New York, USA.) (On the Roosevelt conspiracy, see Dirk Kunert, German-American Relations and Soviet Russia: A Study in Triangular Interactions,

1933-1938. Some Aspects on the Origins of the Great Power Realignment in 1939." Ph. D. Dissertation, Georgetown University 1972.)

Chamberlain: "What I hope for is a collapse of the German internal front."

Several documents from Chamberlain's secret papers have recently been made public. They were commented on in both the German and English press as proof of the prime minister's "peace efforts." In

the otherwise not entirely uncritical Times article of March 18, 1969, on the occasion of the 100th birthday of Neville Chamberlain, his statement in the House of Commons on September 3, 1939, shortly after presenting his ultimatum to Germany, is reproduced:

"Everything I have worked for, everything I have hoped for, everything I have

I believed in during my public life

I believed in during my public life has collapsed into ruins." (p. 416)

This is intended to uphold Chamberlain's reputation as a "prince of peace" even today. That is probably why The Times wisely omits the fact that Chamberlain wrote to his sister a few days later, on September 10, 1939:

"What I hope for is not military victory, which I doubt can be achieved at all, but a collapse of the German internal front." (Keith Feiling: The Life of Neville Chamberlain, London 1945, p. 418.)

Soon afterwards, he confessed to Roosevelt: "I myself believe that we will not win by a complete and spectacular military victory ... but by convincing the Germans that they cannot win. Once the Germans have come to this conclusion, I do not believe that they can remain unyielding in the face of our pressure." (Colvin, p. 255.) To achieve this goal of making Germany itself believe that victory was impossible, the German conspirators were an indispensable auxiliary force. Those who pushed for the outbreak of war in order to eliminate Hitler spread the word wherever they could that the Reich could never win the war.

On September 18, 1939, American Ambassador Joseph Kennedy reported to Secretary of State Cordell Hull:

"I, Kennedy, am completely convinced that Chamberlain is aware of the terrible catastrophe that awaits Great Britain. I believe that he is filled with the desire to wait for fortunate events, such as Italy and its Balkan allies coming to his aid... With all that Hitler has taken upon himself by acquiring new territories, the problem could only return to its economic basis. Hitler would then be thrown out by his own people because he was unable to protect them with the resources available. I also assume that Chamberlain does not expect the collapse of the German people, but nevertheless hopes that the Germans will, within a reasonable period of time, if the blockade works more successfully, take action against the Hitler regime." (FRUS 1939, Vol. I, p. 440£.)

One will recall the statements of Lord Chaffield, Sir Alexander Cadogan, and Chamberlain, which clearly prove that the Chamberlain cabinet needed Poland as an ally from the outset in order to force Germany into a war on two fronts, which alone would make a British blockade successful. But despite the German-Polish war, Chamberlain did not intervene to build up the Franco-British front, but left defeated Poland to its fate. Chamberlain's admission that he never expected a "military victory" shows that he would never have dared to declare war on Germany if he had not been speculating on the conspirators. In his private letters, he admits that he himself forced the outbreak of war. But he still refers to Dahlerus as a "neutral middleman," hoping never to have to admit that the Swede was an agent planted on him by the conspirators. Even after the outbreak of war, he wrote on September 10, 1939:

"The final, protracted agony that preceded the actual declaration of war was as unbearable as it could possibly have been. We wanted to move things forward, but there were three complications: The secret negotiations with Göring and Hitler through a neutral intermediary (Dahlerus), Mussolini's conference proposal, and the French concern to postpone the actual declaration of war for as long as possible until they could evacuate their women and children and mobilize their armies. We could say little about this in public." (Feiling, p. 416f.)

For Chamberlain, anything that delayed his declaration of war on Germany was "unbearable," as he lived in constant fear that Berlin might still come to an agreement with Warsaw and that the existing German conspiracy would be uncovered. He therefore wanted to create a fait accompli of war as quickly as possible.
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and whip up hatred against Germany to a fever pitch. In his speech to the House of Commons on September 3 at 9:15 a.m., he hypocritically told the members of parliament:

"We have a clear conscience; we have done everything that any country could do to preserve peace. But the situation in which no one could believe a word the German leaders said and no people or country could feel safe had become intolerable ... Now may God bless you and may He defend justice, for we will have to fight against evil things, brutal violence, unreliability, injustice, oppression, and persecution." (Feiling, p. 416.)

Feiling called Chamberlain's policy at that time "the double policy of peace and rearmament." In reality, Chamberlain pursued a hypocritical policy not only toward the Reich government, but also toward his allies Poland and France, while at the same time engaging in a laboriously concealed conspiracy with the German conspirators. These contradictory goals could never have been achieved without the unscrupulous cooperation of the traitors.

After 1945, the German conspiracy was taboo.

Hans Rothfels recalls that for a considerable period after the war, the "German opposition was taboo." (Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte 1969, issue 3, p. 251ff.) For example, "a US correspondent who began to investigate the reality of the situation in 1945 was forbidden to publish anything about a specific opposition to Hitler, and this ban was issued by the highest authorities in Washington." Later, Rothfels continues, another American journalist working in Germany had Fabian von Schlabrendorff's book "Offiziere gegen Hitler" (Officers Against Hitler) confiscated. In it, Schlabrendorff describes the plans to invade England after Hitler's peace offer was rejected by Chamberlain. Regarding the attitude of Major General Henning von Tresckow in 1940, it states:

"Iresckow had been involved in a key role in the preparation of this undertaking. We were convinced that the success of the invasion would mean Hitler's rule over Europe. To prevent this success of Hitler at all costs and by all means, even at the expense of a heavy defeat for the Third Reich, was our

most urgent task." (Fabian von Schlabrendorff, Offiziere gegen Hitler [Officers Against Hitler], Askona/New York, first edition 1946, p. 38.)

Another passage, also found only in the first edition of Schlabrendorff's book, deals with the Anglo-American invasion of northern France, which "Churchill had openly announced at the beginning of 1944." After several failed attempts on Hitler's life, which had remained secret, Tresckow and Schlabrendorff finally decided in the summer of 1944 that "the assassination of Hitler must take place at any cost"! Count Stauffenberg was sent to France to General Speidel, Chief of Staff to Field Marshal Rommel, to propose that he "ensure that a hole be torn in the Western Front by issuing false orders, in order to enable the Allies to break through" (ibid., p. 129).

Such truths about the help given to the Allies by the conspirators were not to be revealed too early to either the defeated or the victorious peoples. According to Rothfels, in the summer of 1946, all broadcasters in the American zone were forbidden to mention the "putsch" of 1944 after Frankfurt Radio had planned a memorial service for the second anniversary of the assassination attempt on Hitler. (Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte 1969, p. 251.) Churchill had to write his chapter on "England's greatest hour" as if the British had prevented the German invasion in 1940 on their own. Without the conspirators, such as Schlabrendorff and Tresckow, England would never have been able to avert the impending danger, and without men like Weizsäcker and Canaris, Hitler would have occupied Gibraltar with Franco's already given consent and sealed off the Mediterranean to protect Rommel. As late as 1939, Erich Kordt had called on London to close off the Mediterranean or at least threaten to do so. Now, when it came to protecting German soldiers, Admiral Canaris told Franco, "You must keep Spain out of this game, whatever the cost. Our situation may seem stronger to you. In reality, it is desperate, and we have little hope of winning the war. Franco can rest assured that Hitler will never invade Spain by force of arms." (Colvin, Master Spy, The Incredible Story of Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, Who Was Both Hitler's Chief of Intelligence and a Secret Ally of the British, New York 1951, p. 148.) Canaris, who had been sent to Franco on official business by Hitler,

played a double game, which was confirmed as early as 1948 in the Nuremberg Wilhelmstraße trial of von Weizsäcker. When asked how he had stood by the German-Spanish military alliance and the occupation of Gibraltar in 1940, the former German state secretary replied:

"I was unable to ascertain the Spanish government's intention to enter the war at that time, although I did have the opportunity to speak with the Spanish foreign minister. But to be on the safe side, Canaris and I resorted to an extravagant measure. In order to stir up the Spanish, Hitler sent Admiral Canaris to Spain, because it was well known that Canaris had good old connections there. But I agreed with him that he should instead tell the Spanish the truth and make it clear to them that they would inevitably and inexorably face certain disaster." (Military Court No. 6, Case 11, June 9, 1948, afternoon.)

When asked whether he believed "that Canaris' advice helped keep Spain out of the war," Weizsäcker replied, "I don't know, but I heard 'yes.' I will say this much: The advice he gave was certainly correct." (ibid.)

In his memoirs, Serrano Suner reflects on Franco's global political decision not to side with the Axis powers. He believes that if Franco had decided at the end of 1940 to allow Hitler to pass through

Gibraltar,

"it is more than likely that such a decision by Spain would have meant the end of the war at that moment. The United States was incapable of acting at that time. Roosevelt himself, who was much more realistic than some people there suspected, would then have changed the course of his foreign policy. For it was not for nothing that isolationism dominated the feelings of the overwhelming majority." (Serrano Suner: Zwischen Hendaye und Gibraltar, Zurich 1948, p. 192.)

In his memoir, "England's Greatest Hour," Churchill praises "Franco's deception and ingratitude toward Hitler and Mussolini" with the words:

"Spain held the key that could have put an end to all English ventures in the Mediterranean, but never, even in the darkest hours, did it close the door on us." (London 1949, Vol. II, pp. 459 and 460.)

For half a year, from June to December 1940, the key to world history lay in Franco's hands. Depending on whether he followed Canaris or opted for Hitler's plan, Franco's decision would have a decisive impact on the future of Europe. Similar to Mussolini, he believed that Germany could be transformed by a "strong push from the

With everything being destroyed from within, Franco was convinced that the Reich would inevitably be brought to its knees by the countermeasures of the conspirators. In December 1940, he therefore felt it was his duty to his country not to bind Spain to Germany, which was doomed to defeat.

The American historian S. T. Possony – Hoover Institution, Stanford, California, USA – also deals with what Rothfels calls "questions of moral and political standards" in his work "Zur Bewältigung der Kriegsschuldfrage" (Cologne, 1968). Possony rejects any collective guilt, because "Mr. Müller Sr. was just as little involved in the decision to go to war in 1914 as Mr. Müller Jr. was in 1939" (p. 336 ff.). From this, Possony draws the conclusion: "If the Müllers etc. had all deserted immediately, the resulting catastrophe might have been even bloodier than the world wars. Who knows what 6-10 civil wars would have wrought?" Possony therefore advises dropping the issue of collective guilt. As far as the guilt of small groups or individuals is concerned, he takes the following fundamental position:

"The strategist who is defeated has, at the very least, a heavy responsibility towards his own people. But this is not criminal in nature... This does not rule out the possibility of criminal acts, but such acts are crimes committed by the strategist in his private capacity, such as bribery or embezzlement. These crimes are subject to ordinary state jurisdiction... A wrongful bona fide strategic decision is not punishable, but a decision which, whether for good or bad reasons, is knowingly made in the interests of the enemy is punishable." (ibid.)

While Chamberlain can still be credited with believing that his foolish policy toward Germany was in the best interests of his own country, the same cannot be said of the German conspirators, for all their actions were taken "knowingly in the interests of the enemy." Now that some of the previously sealed Chamberlain papers have come to our attention, the full extent of the conspirators' treacherous activities is gradually becoming known. It is therefore in Germany's interest, and we therefore agree with Possony, "that the time has come to open the archives and hand over to the public all documents that have been kept hidden until now." (Dr. S. T. Possony, Professor of International Politics at Georgetown University, Washington, D.C., and visiting professor at the University of Pennsylvania.)

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The conspirators emphasized their moral opposition to violent politics. But since 1938, they had been trying to force the outbreak of war in order to remove the Reich government by force. J. F. Taylor writes:

"General Ludwig Beck was the first soldier who claimed the right to intervene in politics on moral grounds without being a statesman. In a logical continuation of his ideas, the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg recognized this right as a duty and handed down death sentences against soldiers for their apolitical stance. At the very least, however, the refusal to obey must not go so far that the moral obligation to resist sacrifices all other values whose integrity is just as important as the command of one's own conscience. It takes excessive confidence in the correctness of one's own opinion to disregard the opinions of others. Moreover, from a Christian point of view, it is also questionable to sacrifice divisions to the enemy in the East in order to achieve the elimination of a regime." (J. F. Taylor, July 20, 1944, Anatomy of a Conspiracy. Bremen 1968, p. 78f.)

Taylor continues on the collapse of the German front in Russia before and after Stalingrad: "The former Chief of the General Staff, Beck, had already explained to Wilhelm Leuschner, who was intended to be Goerdeler's vice-chancellor, in 1943:

'The planned coup is no longer necessary. We now have enough trusted people in command positions on the Eastern Front to be able to control the war until the regime collapses. These trusted people are arranging, for example, the retreat of their units without informing the neighboring units. The result was that the Soviets could break through the gaps in the front line and roll up the front on both sides. These neighboring units would then be forced to retreat or be taken prisoner. It is obvious that such a course of action would result in heavy losses of life and material. The conspirators must have had a damn high humanitarian goal in mind to justify such great sacrifices ... An existing emergency situation does justify action, but only with the use of adequate means. These could have included political assassination, but never sabotage and betrayal of Germany's chances of victory, not even the destruction of innocent people in the course of the assassination attempt." (Taylor, op. cit.)

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Editor's closing remarks

Today, almost 30 years after the end of the "Third Reich," one cannot even begin to speak of objective historical research in the sense of Ranke, who sought "to get to the sources." The existing literature on the period from 1933 to 1945 is almost exclusively in the realm of journalism or memoirs. It is thus influenced by the political stance of the reporter or by the interests of the memoirist in terms of self-presentation. The author sees proof that public opinion in Germany is not ready to discuss the phenomenon of the "Third Reich" and the person of Hitler in an unbiased and objective manner not least in the fact that her previous books have been ignored. Neither the public media nor academic historical research have addressed the author's books, even though they essentially contain only interpretations of official documents and statements or memoirs of opponents of the "Third Reich" in the form of leading politicians and military figures from enemy countries at the time, as well as from the highest leadership positions of the "Third Reich" itself.

Coming to terms with our past, insofar as it concerns the years 1933-1945, will certainly not be promoted by continuing the previous crude black-and-white portrayal, but only by examining the conditions that led to the "Third Reich" and the person of Hitler in his significance for world history, and by analyzing the driving forces both at home and abroad that led to the emergence, rise, and ultimate total collapse of this world-historical phenomenon.

It will take a brilliant historian to analyze and describe this complex phenomenon, whose central problem is the person of Hitler, in its context. The great difficulty in understanding this period of history lies in the orientation of the system toward a single person who is unparalleled even in the history of modern dictatorships.

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The accusation that, after almost 30 years, no historian has publicly attempted to evaluate the National Socialist period of German history from an objective point of view because so-called public opinion would attack him fiercely from all sides undoubtedly applies without restriction to the area of domestic policy of the "Third Reich." With regard to foreign policy, it must be admitted that even for a historian who undertakes to present and evaluate German foreign policy objectively within the context of the global political constellation of 1933-1945, it is extremely difficult to obtain the necessary source material. The entire files of the Foreign Office were confiscated by the victors and only partially released after review by the Allies. It can be assumed that the most interesting documents are still under lock and key or will never be published.

Nevertheless, in recent years a number of Allied and German documents have been published without this being acknowledged in any way in the press.

Nevertheless, a number of Allied and German documents have been published in recent years without this being noted in any form in the press. It was only by chance that the author came across a series of documents that are of eminent importance for the assessment of German politics in general and the views of the former Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop in particular. Just one example will be given here:

On December 28, 1937, Ribbentrop, as German ambassador in London, wrote a comprehensive account of German-British relations and the likely future British policy toward Germany. The so-called conclusions to this report, in which Ribbentrop clearly stated, based on his analysis of British policy, that Britain would always be prepared to fight for the vital interests of its empire and, in this context, described the British leadership as "hard and heroic," were presented to the court in Nuremberg by the prosecution as evidencethat Ribbentrop was guilty of preparing a war of aggression. The main part of the report has always been described in official publications as non-existent or lost. By chance, it was discovered among the newly released documents in England and is published here for the first time.

The author has taken on the task of organizing and interpreting these now declassified documents. The result of her work is presented in this book. These documents, in conjunction with other original documents already available to the public and the memoirs of German and foreign politicians and military leaders, provide insight into the background that led to World War II, which, remarkably—or suspiciously, if you will—is never mentioned in the official account of the outbreak of the war.

For at least 200 years, the political stage in Europe had been dominated by the English doctrine of the "balance of power." In a nutshell, this doctrine states that England must always ally itself with the second strongest continental power against the strongest continental power in order to prevent a hegemonic power from establishing itself on the European continent with the help of other allies. In the 18th century, this led to alliances between England and Austria against France, later to a strengthening of Prussia against Austria, and finally to England's accession to the coalition against Napoleon and its benevolent attitude toward Austria and later Prussia in the conflict with Napoleon. With the emergence and decline of the German Empire, English policy became increasingly hostile toward Germany, the traditional enmity toward France was overcome, and an overpowering coalition was formed against the Middle Kingdom with the addition of Russia.

This English policy led to the First World War. Germany's surprising strength in this four-year struggle made it necessary for the British to do everything in their power to win the support of the United States, whose entry into the war ultimately tipped the scales.

With World War I, England had successfully prevented Germany from becoming the leading power in Europe. However, England's success came at the price of relinquishing its position as the world's leading power. This resulted in an extraordinary strengthening of the US and, although unrecognized at first, of the USSR. England had already been forced to grant the Americans equal naval strength in the naval agreement of February 6, 1922, while Japan and East Asia were content with a smaller quota – the ratio between the USA, England, and Japan was 5:5:3 – but in return, Japan became the strongest naval power in East Asia.

The consequences of Versailles – for which England was partly responsible – led directly to a global economic crisis, which

Communism gained strength worldwide. In response to the Bolshevik threat, fueled by the ever-worsening economic crisis, the National Socialist movement arose in Germany under Hitler, who eventually seized power in 1933 and succeeded in quickly restoring economic conditions and thus bringing about Germany's rapid resurgence. In 1935, England may have believed that the naval agreement would serve to demarcate the interests of England and Germany and may even have welcomed an increase in Germany's political weight as a counterweight to Russia. Germany's growing economic, political, and ultimately military strength must have raised fundamental questions for England about its future policy from 1936 onwards.

In view of France's weakness, England was faced with the question of how to deal with Germany.

whether it should expect to see Germany become the dominant power on the continent in the foreseeable future, a power that had been opposed in previous centuries by a coalition aimed at establishing a balance of power. The German argument repeatedly put forward by Ribbentrop that the new "balance of power" in Europe would result from the balance of power between Germany and

Russia and that England would thus still be able to occupy its desired position of "sitting on the fence" was not accepted by the English. The English expression "sitting on the fence" means that whoever takes this position is free to choose one side or the other at any time. At that time, England underestimated both Russia's military strength and the danger of ideological communist infiltration of its workforce. Russia's military strength was proven in World War II, confirming the correctness of the German argument, and it seems, especially these days, that the warning about the ideological-communist threat to England, which was repeatedly raised by the German side at the time, was not just empty rhetoric.

British policy was thus faced with the dilemma of either repeating the policy of 1914 and, with the material and moral backing of America, confronting Germany with weaker allies such as France and one or two Eastern European states, risking a second armed conflict on life and death and, even in the event of victory, running the risk of losing the British Empire for good, or

to refrain from this debate and thus run the risk of allowing Germany to become the strongest continental power sooner or later, thereby gradually losing political influence in Europe.

Misjudging the global political balance of power, English politicians fixated on the danger of German supremacy in Europe, which they believed could not be kept in check even by the Russian empire, and feared that the head of the English empire could one day be reduced to an insignificant island off the coast of Europe.

When Austria enthusiastically joined the German motherland, thereby significantly strengthening the German Empire, the question of how England would position itself toward Germany became urgent. In this situation, the English government, or rather members of the English leadership, increasinglyextent from the German opposition, which urged them, in return for revealing crucial military, armament, and economic state secrets, to remain tough on Germany, risk war, and thus create the conditions for Hitler's removal.

It is significant that this opposition was not a group of outsiders dissatisfied with the regime, but included civil servants and military personnel in key positions in the German Reich, such as the Chief of the General Staff, the State Secretary in the Foreign Office, and the President of the Reichsbank, to name only the most prominent representatives.

The offer by the German opposition to remove Hitler in the event of war offered British politicians a way out of their dilemma. It now seemed conceivable that, by taking the military risk of war with Germany, it would be possible to remove Hitler and thus decisively weaken the Reich without having to wage a real war and thereby expose the empire to the burdens of a world war.

A dictatorship can only remain in power as long as it has armed force behind it. If, therefore, the chief of the general staff, on behalf of senior military figures, together with senior representatives of the British government, repeatedly guaranteed that Hitler would be eliminated in the event of war, this had to strengthen the British government's willingness to take the risk of a

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war. This seemed to her to be the perfect solution to the deadly dilemma described above, bringing about a decisive weakening of the German Empire without having to risk an exhausting war that would mean the end of the British Empire and—to anticipate the outcome—ultimately did.

Looking back, 1938 stands out in world history as a year in which the British government played for time. The great "peace politician" Chamberlain went to Munich to buy time to bring British armaments up to the minimum level necessary to be able to run the risk of war, which the German opposition had repeatedly proposed. The year 1939 showed how right the British prime minister was not to take this risk without a certain minimum level of armament. At the decisive moment, the German opposition did not have the courage to attempt a coup, even though the British were risking the outbreak of war, which the German opposition had repeatedly proposed, as the documents in this book show.

The establishment of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia in the spring of 1939 had left the British government with no opportunity to intervene, as developments had taken place too quickly and, moreover, the Czechoslovak president himself had asked for the protection of the German Reich. The Slovaks wanted to become independent anyway. This led to developments in Czechoslovakia that resulted in the dissolution of the state. Germany's renewed increase in power now demanded a decision from the British government. Once again, as can be seen from the above, it was bombarded with all kinds of information from the German opposition that "Poland was next." German policy in 1938 was still based on the concept of peace and friendship in the West, i.e., toward England and France. Hitler's official renunciation of Alsace-Lorraine and Strasbourg and the construction of the Siegfried Line are clear proof of this. The concept of German policy toward the East was aimed at creating a strong defensive bloc against the Russian giant. The solution of the remaining territorial problems left over from the Treaty of Versailles was seen as a prerequisite for this.

From this point of view, a proposal was made to the Polish government in November 1938 to resolve these territorial problems in such a way that Danzig would return to the Reich and Poland

Germany be granted a four-track motorway and railway line through the corridor to East Prussia. Even today, it cannot be claimed that these were excessive demands. According to Hitler's plans, Poland was to play a decisive role in defending against the USSR. As early as 1934, a non-aggression pact had been concluded with Poland, which at the time met with little understanding in Germany, especially among those whose exponents were now warning British politicians that "now it was Poland's turn"!

The documents show that Goerdeler and Kleist-Schmenzin, in particular, demanded assurances from the British that the corridor problem would be resolved in Germany's favor in exchange for their offer to overthrow Hitler.

It can therefore be concluded that the German opposition circles, which sabotaged Hitler's attempts to resolve the corridor problem in negotiations with Poland on the basis of extremely moderate demands, wanted to provoke a war in order to overthrow Hitler, essentially recognized the legitimacy of his revisionist policy in the East and were striving for solutions that went much further than those Hitler had proposed to Poland in 1938.

Polish Foreign Minister Beck was not prepared to negotiate on the basis of these German proposals.

The only rational explanation for his complete shift to the British line at the beginning of 1939 is that, under the impression of the proposed plans for a coup, he considered Germany to be decisively weaker than the Western powers. Was this impression not ultimately justified? When the top German military leaders, together with high-ranking officials from the Foreign Office and the civil administration, had been explaining for two years through various channels that Germany's economic and military situation was so bad, that the masses were dissatisfied, and that all that was needed to create the psychological conditions for removing Hitler was the outbreak of war, which the German people certainly did not want, does that not give the impression that the regime was practically on the verge of collapse?

The British ambassador in Berlin, Henderson, describes in his memoirs a conversation with the Polish ambassador Lipski two days before the outbreak of war, in which he urged him to accept the moderate German proposals for a solution to the corridor problem, and received the reply that he would not consider it. If there were war, there would be

Germany was in revolution, and the Polish army would be in Berlin in a few days. Even if one takes into account the well-known Polish chauvinism and the arrogance of many Polish politicians, such a response, especially after the German-Russian pact had been concluded, can only be explained by the fact that British and, consequently, Polish policy was counting on a coup in Germany. There is no other explanation today for the fact that Chamberlain, when he gave the guarantee to Poland, and Foreign Minister Beck, when he accepted it, assumed that it would never actually have to be implemented. Every child could see that it was technically impossible to implement this guarantee, and one can safely assume that neither the British nor the Polish general staff expected the British army, navy, or air force to come to Poland's aid in any form.

If one considers the German proposals of August 1939 once again, and if one further considers that Germany and Russia had concluded a clear alliance with each other, the Polish attitude is understandable in view of the clear impossibility of obtaining military assistance from the Western powers. only understandable if they had been made aware by the British of clear promises made by the German opposition to remove Hitler from power through a coup after the outbreak of war. It can therefore be concluded that a peaceful solution to the Danzig question and the corridor problem in 1939 would have been entirely possible given the political constellation, had the German opposition not – and this must be stated quite clearly – made false promises to the British, which decisively strengthened their willingness to accept the risk of war. After the outbreak of war, the leaders of the German opposition did not have the courage to attempt a coup and thus broke the promise they had made to the British government, having repeatedly broken the oath they had sworn to their people in previous years.

One would be tempted to speak of a classic tragedy of global political proportions if the actors in this play had the personal stature of the great classical tragic figures. On the one hand, the leading figures of a world empire who believe they can evade historical and political decisions by basing their decisions on questionable

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On the one hand, there were the promises made by conspirators, albeit in high and important positions;

on the other hand, there were precisely those people who, as the highest dignitaries of the Reich, committed treason on an unimaginable scale, pretending to have followed their conscience by provoking a world war, knowing full well that each of them could have solved the problem with a pistol and personal commitment. Hitler's role in this global political game is not up for discussion here. Suffice it to say that high treason in a dictatorship – and, if one believes one can justify it with one's conscience, even the murder of a tyrant – can be motivated by high human qualities, provided that personal commitment is involved. But treason, as it was practiced here and as it is honored today in Germany, strikes at the very roots of the forces that ultimately make a human community possible. When people in the highest political and military positions of the Reich cause a foreign power to wage war on their own country and then shy away from the personal risk of facing the consequences before the devastating war has begun, and subsequently limit themselves to sabotaging the war effort, costing the lives of hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of German soldiers, then that was, and always will be, a crime worthy of condemnation.

If one glorifies this attitude, one will have nothing to say against the Bundeswehr officer who betrays military secrets to the Warsaw Pact powers because he cannot in good conscience justify the aggressive imperialist policies of the capitalist states. The tragic inevitability of Greek tragedy was not present here. In the conflict between oath and conscience, the people referred to here did not make a major decision and sacrifice their lives for it. With complete self-preservation, they found the solution in treacherous betrayal and, moreover, deceived their English partners in a way that would have earned them nothing but contempt from that side, were it not for the fact that the English politicians were compelled by reasons of state to keep silent about their lapse.